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BRITISH PREACHERS

1925

BRITISH PREACHERS 1925

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BRITISH PREACHERS

1925

Edited by
SIR JAMES MARCHANT, K.B.E., LL.D

NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

BV
4241
.B63
1925
C.2

First Published March 1925

Reprinted July 1925

Reprinted October 1925

Reprinted December 1925

Made in Great Britain by
THE BOTOLPH PRINTING WORKS
GATE STREET, KINGSWAY, W.C.2

EDITOR'S NOTE

"BRITISH PREACHERS" is the first of an annual volume of sermons which it is proposed to publish. The selection for the present volume has been made with the help of The Lord Bishop of Birmingham, Rev. R. C. Gillie, D.C.L., Rev. J. C. Carlile, D.D., C.B.E., and the Rev. Archibald Chisholm, D.Litt., to whom the Editor is indebted.

February 1925.

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REV. L. P. JACKS, D.D., LL.D., D.LITT.

LAWRENCE PEARSALL JACKS,
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CONTACTS WITH THE UNSEEN

REV. L. P. JACKS, D.D., LL.D., D.Litt.

"A Shadow of Good Things to Come."

Hebrews x, 1.

THE writer is here speaking of the moral law, the law of right and wrong, of which every man's conscience is a reflection, and every man's life an illustration. He tells us that the meaning of this moral law is to be found in something beyond itself, of which it is the shadow.

A man who lives by the law of duty, doing what he believes to be right, not doing what he believes to be wrong, looks to us at first sight a plain, homely and intelligible figure. But in truth he is not so. The profoundest of all mysteries comes to a head in that man's life. An unbroken chain connects it with the foundations of the universe. That man with his homely creed and faithful life is bearing witness to a hidden world of unsearchable riches. This law of duty that he obeys is a shadow—a shadow of good things to come—a shadow of better things than itself. It is one of those "shadowy intimations" of which Wordsworth speaks in his "Ode to Immortality."

A good man's life is a real thing as far as it goes. The world that is seen and temporal contains nothing more real than it. But when we compare

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it with the deeper reality from which it proceeds, with the eternal things to which it leads up and bears witness, it is like a shadow compared to the substance. The good man's life confers solid benefits upon his fellow-citizens ; it makes these earthly cities better places for men to live in ; but its true meaning lies in a city not of earth but of heaven, a city that hath foundations, a glorious and imperishable kingdom, not of this world, from which all souls came forth at the beginning and to which they may all return when their earthly pilgrimage is done. The shadow of that heavenly city falls into our life at many points ; it takes many forms—and the moral law, the familiar distinction between right and wrong, is one of the forms the shadow takes.

I

In all this the writer is speaking the language of an ancient philosophy ; but the truths he is speaking of are neither old nor new—because they are eternal. It is high and precious language, the full meaning of which our age and generation have yet to understand.

We live, you and I, on the very edge of a profound mystery. Just beyond us, just beyond the limit to which our vision can reach, there is a hidden world very closely connected with the world we are so familiar with, but yet concealed from mortal sense. All we get of it are the shadowy

intimations which fall across our path. These shadows we see, often without paying much heed to them ; but the hidden reality that casts the shadows remains invisible.

And yet, though we do not see it, the hidden world is constantly reminding us of its presence. It makes its presence *felt*. It touches our life with many strange experiences. It fills us with wistfulness and curiosity ; its influences flow over us when we are meditating or dreaming ; it haunts us in many a waking hour ; it surprises us with gleams of beauty ; it makes us dissatisfied and uneasy, like men who are troubled by the presence of a spirit ; and sometimes it breaks out suddenly, like an earthquake, and shakes the whole world. At all times this hidden thing knocks at the doors of life, though we only hear it when other sounds are still—"Behold I stand at the door and knock." Everywhere its shadows fall across our path. They fall on the philosopher's book ; they fall on the lovers' meeting ; they fall on the child at play ; they fall on the chemist in his laboratory ; they fall on the martyr at the stake ; they fall on the soldier who dies in battle, and they fall on the face of the dead. In all these there is something that we see ; and there is also something infinitely greater that we see not but which somehow makes us aware of its presence.

There are times when these visitations crowd into our life, when instead of gently knocking at the door, they besiege us and bombard us and seem as though they would carry us by storm—as when

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we look upon some beloved face in the majesty and stillness of death. Sometimes they prompt us to do deeds for which no reason can be given, for which no utility can be alleged. Why are men eager to scale Mount Everest? Because the Invisible leads them on; because on that lonely and terrible summit, won by heroic endeavour, they will be a little nearer to God. Why did the woman pour precious spikenard on the head of Christ? Because the Invisible was prompting her. All the noblest deeds of man have been prompted in the same way. They are irruptions of the Eternal into the world of time.

Whether we know it or not, every moment of our lives is passed on the very edge of these great realities. The partition that divides us from these is as thin as any partition possibly could be. They lie all round us closer than the atmosphere, nearer than our own bodies. Shakespeare has compared the scene of our life to a shoal, to a narrow ledge of dry land, raised a little above the surrounding waters. "This shoal and bank of time" is what he calls it. There your lot and mine are cast. A little island in the midst of immensity—nothing more! A lonely place to those who think of themselves as stranded and forgotten, but not lonely if we can feel the invisible links that bind it to the world beyond, not lonely if we can hear the voices that call to us across the deep, not lonely if we have learnt that wherever there is a soul in darkness, obstruction or misery, there also is a power which

can enlighten, deliver, and help. These are the forces which redeem our life from its brutishness ; these are the values which invest it with glory and make living worth while, and before which our light afflictions shrink to nothing. Never do they leave us alone ; never does the play of their fingers cease on the manifold keyboards of life, of senses, intellect, imagination and heart, evoking in us the mystery named consciousness, so that deep answers unto deep. " I am not *alone*," said Jesus, " because the Father is with me " ; " Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."

II

In presence of this high mystery what shall we do ? What shall we say ? What attitude shall we take ?

There are, so far as I can see, only two modes of answering that question. The first is that we should turn our backs on the ocean of eternity and devote ourselves to this " shoal and bank of time " on which our lot appears to be cast. Many have done this, and recommended it as the ultimately reasonable course. They know that the mystery is there, but they choose to disregard it. " We can make nothing of it," they say, " it has nothing to do with us, nor we with it. It is an irritant and a disturbance. It is a nuisance and an obstacle. It is the unknowable. It wastes the energies of

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those who tamper with it. It leads nowhere—a dark thing that can only be left to itself. Leave it alone then and cultivate your gardens. Turn your back upon it, and treat it as though it were nothing.”

I once heard that very advice given to a young man who was sorely perplexed about the meaning of his life. “Turn your back upon the mystery.” The young man’s answer was, “*I wish I could.*” Many of us no doubt have wished that, though perhaps not wisely. We wish we could; but we cannot. The mystery itself has something to say in the matter. It is a living thing and will not suffer itself to be shaken off. The tighter we bolt the door against it, the louder it knocks. The more we turn away from these things, the more we refuse to face them, the darker they become—the darker, but not the less real, not the less bound up with the very structure of our lives, not the less interfused with the very substance of our souls.

Living, then, on the edge of these immortal things, are there no points of contact between us and them, no bridges to carry the traffic between the two worlds, no openings where the veil is lifted up and intercourse is free? Points of contact between time and eternity! There are many such; and if we use them, as we may, if we let our thought travel along them, and our actions follow where our thought is leading us, then they will carry us further and further towards the good things that are to come; so that the mystery of life, which is so immeasurably dark when we first

encounter it, will begin to glow with an inner radiance, until finally it becomes luminous through and through, still mysterious, still unsearchable, and yet an unsearchable light and no longer an unsearchable darkness. Let me mention some of these points of contact, between time and eternity, between man and God, between the son and the Father.

III

One has been spoken of already. In the moral law, in that plain sense of duty, which no scepticism can invalidate, there is unquestionably a link with the things that are unseen and eternal—not the only link by any means, but the one on which all the others depend for their holding power. Has it ever occurred to you that in dealing with your conscience you were dealing with a visitor from a higher world? Have you ever felt that this familiar force which pulls at you so often has its other end fastened down in the very foundations of the world, in the very roots of the universe, in the very heart of God? Hold to it as your sheet anchor amid the storms and rocking confusions of life! Make use of it in daily practice, not only for the assurance and peace it will give you here and now, but as a means of linking your life to the imperishable glories of a divine universe, and for confirming your citizenship among the immortals who there inhabit. It

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is a point of contact between two worlds, your conscience.

Three more are mentioned by St. Paul—faith, hope and charity ; faith which is a gentler name for courage, hope which is the foster-mother of joy, and charity, the greatest of all, which is too high a thing to be reached by any definition, beyond the tongues that bewilder, beyond the prophecies that turn out false, beyond the knowledge that betrays. Walk hand in hand with these three ; take them not as the themes of your eloquence but as the business of your daily lives ; talk about them little but love them much. Then what will happen shall be this : the point of contact will open out, the bridges between the two worlds will throng with traffic, and the heavenly city will come down to meet you, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband.

And if you love beauty, and are sensitive to its never-failing presence round about you, and still more if you have the power to create it by the skill of your hand or the magic of your voice, there too is a gleam to be followed up, a gleam that will never betray you, very graciously sent down, as it seems to me, into a world that would be utterly dark without it, and penetrating the smallest thing that exists.

And if knowledge is your line, if you are a student, bent on probing the significance of nature or of history, every new thing you learn will be a fresh point of contact with immensity ; every step will

find you gazing into a deeper Beyond ; every truth you discern will call for its completion in a truth more radiant than itself, and will deepen your reverence for the majestic secrets of the universe.

These, surely, are points of contact enough. Yet there is one other, so profound, so far-reaching, so tremendous in its issues, that it is almost wrong in me to mention it after the rest, as though it were a mere tail-piece to the story. This last is one of the central truths of the Christian religion. I will indicate it in the briefest possible manner and leave you to think it over. It is the Cross.

Two things there are which fall to the lot of every being that draws the breath of life, two things which no effort of ours to improve the world will ever get rid of : suffering, which none can escape in some degree ; death, which has no degrees but which all must accept on the same terms. The Cross is the symbol of suffering and of death. It awaits us all.

What is the meaning of these two ? Christianity has an answer. It tells us that suffering, endured for love, suffering prolonged to extremity in the service of any noble cause, becomes in its final phase a point of union with immortal joy ; it tells us that death, of which all suffering is a premonition, death, where the mystery deepens to its darkest, is the point from which the soul steps off into a world of light. " The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." The supreme point of contact with the absolute values of an immortal universe !

Accept that, and the rest is easy. Faith, hope

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and love ; conscience, goodness, beauty and truth—you will walk among these things and interpret them aright. You will see through them into the great Beyond whence they issue. And lastly, pain and death. Shadows, indeed, “ black as the night from pole to pole,” but shadows of good things to come ; growing-points of the unsearchable riches, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

REV. R. J. CAMPBELL, D.D.

*REV. REGINALD JOHN CAMPBELL,
D.D.*

BORN in London in 1867, he is the son and grandson of Nonconformist Ministers: Ulster Protestants of Scottish extraction. He was educated at University College, Nottingham and Christ Church, Oxford, where he graduated in Honours in the School of Modern History and Political Science. In 1895 he entered the Congregational Ministry at Union Chapel, Brighton; and from 1903-1915 he was in charge of the City Temple, London, in succession to Dr. Joseph Parker. Ordained in 1916 into the Ministry of the Church of England, he was attached to Birmingham Cathedral, and became Honorary Chaplain to the Bishop of that Diocese. In 1917 he returned to London as Vicar of Christ Church, Westminster. In 1919 he obtained the degree of D.D. from Oxford University. Dr. Campbell is now incumbent of Holy Trinity, Brighton—the Church made famous by the ministry of the Rev. F. W. Robertson. Amongst the volumes which he has published are: "The New Theology," "Christianity and the Social Order," "The Ladder of Christ," "Thursday Mornings at the City Temple," "A Spiritual Pilgrimage," "Words of Comfort," "Problems of Life," "Life of Christ."

DELIVERANCE FROM SPIRITUAL BONDAGE

REV. REGINALD JOHN CAMPBELL, D.D.

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Romans vi, 22.

MANY years ago as an undergraduate I had to work through the Institutes of Justinian, that compact body of Roman jurisprudence which has become the basis of the legal systems of most modern civilised communities. And I am glad I did, for it has enabled me to obtain a better grasp of the meaning of some New Testament figures of speech than one could otherwise have done. The Latin language was a very precise instrument for the expression of legal ideas, and there is no doubt that the forms and practices of Roman law, which were in force everywhere throughout the civilised world in apostolic times, must have supplied categories for Christian thought. Greek philosophy did the same, as everybody knows, but it was Roman law which was the mould in which the Christian doctrine of salvation took its traditional shape—not altogether, perhaps, to its advantage, for its tendency on the whole has been to be too forensic and not

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sufficiently ethical. But, be that as it may, we cannot but admit that in such a sentence as my text of this morning the influence of concepts derived directly from Roman law is conspicuous. The writer's thought is that we are by nature the bondservants of a master called sin whose service issues in death, but that Christ has come and paid the price of His own death for our emancipation, so that henceforth we are free to serve Him in righteousness. He now becomes our master instead of sin ; we are His bondservants, and the fruit of the service we render will be eternal life. The metaphor thus elaborately employed right through this chapter is that of the ceremony of emancipation as prescribed in the Roman code governing the relations of master and slave. This is the explanation of such peculiar sentences as, "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness," and "When ye were the servants of sin ye were free from righteousness."

So far the thought is quite clear. But now let us proceed to inquire whether it answers to anything real in our experience, and is a fair description of something which actually takes place, or whether it is a mere theory without living relation to what we know and feel about ourselves in this regard. Is it true that we are the bondservants of sin, and is it true that Christ sets us free if we are prepared to accept the freedom ? If so, how is it true ?

I

Is there any man in all this congregation who does not feel himself to be to some extent in bondage to things in his own nature from which he earnestly desires to get free? It goes without saying that we are all in bondage more or less to circumstances and to the conditions—often the very unideal conditions—under which we are having to live our lives in human society. But for the moment I am not thinking of that; I am thinking of our inner life as individuals. Dark, and gross, and terrible things sometimes come to light which show how human beings can be made the helpless sport of mighty forces that seem to rise from abysmal depths within themselves and sweep them to destruction despite their utmost efforts to resist and break free. One meets with the strangest inconsistencies in the qualities which dwell within the same breast and, in swift alternations, assume control of the actions of one and the same person. It gives ground for the speculation whether what we call personality is a unity at all or whether it is a bundle of incoherent tendencies loosely bound together and destined ultimately to fly apart. You see the same man kind, thoughtful, amiable, generous, high-minded; and cruel, heartless, intractable, mean-spirited, dastardly. Which is the true man? It seems amazing that the one set of instincts could live with the other without destroying them, but such appears to be the fact. You might suppose that

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pride and humility, intolerance and wide sympathy, harshness and tenderness, could not co-exist as permanent features of one and the same individuality. But they do ; the fact that they are the polar opposites of each other seems to make no difference to their power of dwelling together. The heart can be a hell of conflicting passions and desires, a pandemonium of violent attractions and repulsions. I have come across some strange things in my time in this way in the exercise of my spiritual office. One has found a man living two lives, a clean and a filthy, a noble and an ignoble ; and when he is asked why, the only answer he can give is that he does not know ; his baser propensities, he says, rise up every now and then like a black flood and overwhelm his will and every high resolve he has ever made. Nor does it bring him happiness ; he may be utterly miserable—generally is in such cases—but his misery does not set him free.

Walt Whitman's lament over moral failure is a true description of what most people feel concerning the conflict between the better self and a baser self who seems to be somebody else :

“ A soul confined with bars and bands
Cries, ‘ Help ! O, help ! ’ and wrings her hands . . .
‘ It was not I that sinned the sin,
The ruthless body dragged me in ;
Though long I strove courageously,
The body was too much for me ’ ”

And this again is but an echo of St. Paul's outcry in the chapter immediately following that which contains my text. "It is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" If for "the body" you read "the lower nature," the statement is true of all moral effort and all consciousness of failure. We are not free to be what we should like to be or feel we ought to be. And, what is more, we cannot but feel that this consciousness bars us out or shuts us off from true union and harmony with God.

The apostle then is right about the experience. Now let us see if he is right about the deliverance which he says is available for those who want to escape this bondage. And in the first place let me point out that the belief that there is such a deliverance has produced some marvellous results in the regeneration of human lives. It is worth while to note that the thing happens: people do get free from their subjection to seemingly invincible habits and forces which have worked their undoing. They get a fresh start, seem to be made over again, have their very being revolutionised by the insurgence of some new principle of life and power that lifts them above old levels and gives them confidence that they can attain to what is higher still. Their

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struggles are not over by any means, but a new feeling of mastery comes into the soul, an awareness of divine resources never realised before, and of the certainty of prevailing in the end. As I say, this is worth emphasising. However we may account for it, the change is actually wrought in countless lives, and goes on being wrought by the same means, simple faith in Christ.

II

Let me pause here to point out that the renewal of life thus promised does not relate principally to making people good in terms of this world ; its bearing is upon something greater and more elevating than that. Note the apostle's language concerning the object to be attained. He says : "*Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting—that is, eternal—life.*" That is plain enough, is it not ? What is promised in these words is nothing less than the acquirement of supernatural virtue—that is, virtue unattainable by the natural man ; it is only secondarily, and in a comparatively small degree, that it can rightly be described as having to do with our standing and worth in relation to our fellow-men here and now. In saying this I must be careful not to be misunderstood. It is quite true that one of the first things that does happen to a man who has become spiritually regenerate—that

is, who has become definitely and consciously possessed by the Spirit of Christ—is that he forthwith becomes a blessing to all around him; no one can have to do with him without feeling the difference; the nearer he stands to God the better and more beneficent is the influence of his personality in all ordinary human relations; it could not be otherwise. But it cannot be too emphatically stated that this is only a consequence or a concomitant of something far more radical and important. In salvation properly understood it is not utilitarian, or merely social, this-world values that are at stake, not merely the production of good citizens or good members of the family circle, but the creation of true sanctity, the awakening in the soul of an experience that belongs intrinsically to the transcendental order, to heaven rather than to earth. Anything that falls short of this is a misunderstanding of what is assured to us in the gospel of Christ. As Baron von Hügel says in his “Mystical Element of Religion”: “Once more we find non-identity between the very Ethics directly postulated by Religion at its deepest, and the Ethics immediately required by the Family, Society, the State, Art, Science and Philosophy. As Prof. Troeltsch admirably puts it, ‘the special characteristic of our modern consciousness resides in the insistence both upon the Religious, the That-world Ends, *and* upon the Cultural, This-world Ends which latter are taken as Ends in themselves; it is precisely in this combination that this

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consciousness finds its richness, power, and freedom, but also its painful interior tension and its difficult problems.' " And Christopher Dawson in "God and the Supernatural" puts the case thus: "The Christian does not simply acquire extrinsic supernatural faculties, his whole life becomes supernatural." To put the matter briefly: if you are united to Christ you are at once brought into living relation with an order of transcendental values, with a good that never can be wholly expressed in terms of this world, and you are put into possession of a precious experience which grows ever richer and gladder as we use and draw upon it day by day.

Before drawing to a close let me earnestly commend to you the practicality of what is thus offered. It is true that we live in days when many people are content with a good which is only of this present life and looks no further. But there are others who cannot thus be satisfied, and amongst these the majority of my hearers this morning have probably to be reckoned. For one reason or another, or no clear reason that you can give except that you know your soul is hungering for God and the life eternal, you have turned away from the allurements and disappointments of your daily lot to seek for what is higher and more enduring. It may be that there are more people who feel like this than one would readily gather from ordinary observation of the signs of the times. A competent thinker, Mr. Archibald Weir, says in a book recently published, that when the average man has learnt as clearly as

the philosopher knows now that all our acquaintance with the forces of nature, all our science and positive knowledge, have not brought us one whit nearer to an understanding of the fundamental mysteries of existence, a spiritual reaction is not only possible but probable. He thinks we may live to see a complete change of view on the part of civilisation as a whole owing to a general disillusionment with secular hopes and aims. He says further: "The events of the last few years have shaken the confidence which was general, that our civilisation was safe from extreme calamities, a confidence which almost amounted to a sort of consolatory theism. Any doctrine of trust capable of taking the place of this old and discredited confidence would have to dispense with reliance on external safeguards. It would have to derive all its value from the human soul itself. If ever such a doctrine of trust comes to be developed and elucidated for the instruction of puzzled men, then at last the religion of all wise men will become a common possession." And he concludes: "Probably there never lived before in this world at one time so many men who would choose, if choose they might, the existence of the saint rather than careers of worldly success."

III

In other words the spiritually restless and unsatisfied are turning back to Christ who alone is

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able to impart what they are conscious of needing. This is not what the author I have just quoted actually says, but it appears to me the inevitable deduction therefrom. To know Christ as one's personal Saviour is to win through to the deliverance of which we are all in quest.

But how can we know Christ in this way? It is one thing to know Him as a mighty figure in the past and quite another to know Him as a warm living personal presence here and now, the nearest, tenderest, and most helpful of all friends. The great teacher of ages long ago is not enough; we want the ever-living Companion of our souls who can and will usher us into the perfect freedom of the sons of God. Now this Christ, this very Christ for whom we long, is truly available for you who hear me at this moment, and you can discover and appropriate His grace and power for yourselves. Let me show you how. I have just been reading the testimony of a man who says that he managed to work his way out of a daily obsession of anxieties and dreads by coming to realise how little, comparatively speaking, any of us have to do with the shaping of our own lives. When he contemplated the marvellous ingenuity and resourcefulness of the universal life that is manifesting through the teeming millions of organisms that live their little day on this planet, he could not but be conscious of the futility of imagining that it had nothing to do with him or had resigned into his hands the entire direction of his concerns. Looking back across the ages he

observed how amazingly that inexhaustible life-force overcame one obstacle after another in pursuit of its ends. When one road was blocked it speedily found a second, if one organism or species failed and went under it unhesitatingly created a better and finer one. More than that, it has ever been taking us by surprise, so to speak, by the way in which it will leap to higher altitudes, by its unforeseen developments and achievements both in the natural world and in humankind. And the life-force is only another name for God. Translate it into spiritual terms and immediately we are dealing with our ever-blessed Redeemer and Lord; for what is so beautifully true of creation as a whole is still more wonderfully true of the work of Christ in the soul that is yielded to Him in the simplicity of faith and love. The testimony I have just cited reminds me of another, that of a horticultural expert in California, that land of sunshine and abundant fertility. It is common knowledge that in California all kinds of experiments have been and are being made with a view to the production of new and finer specimens of fruits and flowers, and many admirable results have been thus obtained. But the informant I have just mentioned told me that the most astonishing facts in his experience of what Nature could do along this line were the totally unexpected and unprepared for. He said it filled him with awe and something akin to worship for he could not but feel that a smiling divine artificer working from the other side of the veil of sense

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took delight in surprising him occasionally by a sudden and unanticipated touch of creative power. Thus he, the human worker, would be labouring at the cultivation of a certain bed of blooms of familiar hue, shape and size, when lo ! one fine morning a new species would appear among them differing *in toto* from its fellows, yet more gorgeously garbed than they, more delicate in shade, more exquisite in design. Not only so, but once that new species came it remained ; it was a permanent feature of the garden, reproducing itself continually. What was this but a miracle, the kind of miracle that is for ever recurring, not only in the world around us but in our inmost souls ? It is an illustration of the way in which divine grace operates in our experience. You do your best within the laws and conditions of your being and yet come short, or you fail altogether as the case may be, and then you find that God in his unearned mercy and loving kindness has gone immeasurably beyond what you ever asked or looked for, has thought for you, and planned and brought to perfection over and above all your care and striving a beauty and sweetness which are not of time but eternity.

Committing ourselves then in utter humility of spirit and simplicity of faith to the operation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, this is what we may look for and expect in our own actual experience of the life that we live with Him. As says the apostle himself as the summary of the Christian hope : “ That He would grant you,

REV. REGINALD JOHN CAMPBELL

according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

REV. J. A. HUTTON, D.D.

*REV. JOHN ALEXANDER HUTTON,
D.D.*

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THE REOPENING OF THE WELLS

REV. JOHN ALEXANDER HUTTON, D.D.

“ And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father ; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham.” Genesis xxvi, 18.

IN the village where I was born and a few hundred yards beyond its farthest dwelling-house, there was a well by the wayside. It had been there from immemorial days. Perhaps it was at one time a holy well ; for there is a tradition that in those ancient days, which were so full of faith and poetry, the place was a centre of religious activity and retreat. In those ancient days every well was a holy well. To-day, when we are more timid with regard to spiritual things, having lost in this region the courage of our feelings, we would call *that* superstition. But it was not superstition. It was faith ; it was simply the childlike and beautiful faith that “ every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above.” Even so late as my own boyhood that well ran clear. In still earlier days it had been the refuge of the village in every time of drought. Long years ago there, amongst others, a girl sat many a day awaiting her turn to draw water ; and she, in an exquisite poem, has

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given that well a humble immortality. Perhaps it was as she sat there waiting and thinking, pondering the mystery of pure water finding its way up to the light from the dark chambers of the earth, that the fire descended upon her spirit. She wrote an "Ode to Garibaldi" and a "Hymn of praise for the dawn of Italian Liberty"—odes which in turn fired the soul of John Bright, who, long years afterwards, visited our village and unveiled a monument—a fountain of running water—to the memory of the poetess who as a girl had drawn water from the well. A few years ago I passed the very spot. The hole in the wall remained. The scooped-out place where formerly the blessed water lay could still be seen. But the well was dry. It was nauseous with mud and rubbish. The Philistines had stopped it with stones. A few more years and doubtless it will have been removed. (In fact it is now quite removed; and the town has in its place a carefully pointed wall which can be guaranteed to produce no poetry!)

But I have no wish to indulge myself in futile sentiment. I wish to speak of the ways of wells, indeed; but the wells I am thinking of are the souls of men.

I

It sends a wave of yearning over hearts of a certain quality to see a well, where once clear water

ran, now choked with earth, a home for creeping things. But a more tragic spectacle it will always surely be to see a human soul, a being capable of all the divine generousities of a man, giving no sign of a holy source and background to his life. Yet such is the Christian view of every human being. We stand related to the great world of spirit. On the interior side of our life we are at this moment in contact with the generous wealth of God's own life. And yet in how few of us the holy stream runs smoothly day by day! In how many is it at best an intermittent flow, a hasty turbulent rush one day, carrying with it the obstructions of days or weeks or months, followed by a time of reaction, of dryness and deadness and silence! And in how many, it would seem, the waters have quite ceased to flow! The outlet has been closed for years. The dust of accumulated carelessness has sealed the delicate apertures by which alone the holy things rise up from the depths within us all. Great stones have been allowed to embarrass and impede the high moments when the soul within might have broken the seal of the mere casual dust. And in the case of some, with a little regret it may be at the first, but soon with deliberate intention, they have built up the wall; they have finally denied that it is any part of a man's duty to embody in his life the thoughts of God.

The Bible speaks of us when we are what God would have us, as "living wells of water"; and

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the same Bible describes us when we have failed to fulfil or sustain the part which God intended for us, as "wells without water."

We shall best make use of our time then in considering two aspects of this matter, and shall ask ourselves, first, how it comes to pass that wells run dry, and, second, what means may we take to bring back the flow.

II

How does it come about that wells run dry? Wells, like human souls, run dry as the result, for one thing, of neglect. If you let a well alone, if that well be placed by the wayside, in course of time the waters within it will fail. The dust from the wayside will gather on the surface of the water and sink through the water to the tiny and delicate apertures which communicate with the depths beneath. At first only a thin layer of dust will lie about those apertures; but in course of time that layer of dust will be reinforced from above, until at last it forms a crust which effectually cuts off the tender unobtrusive flow. Beginning at the surface of the well, that choking process sinks deeper and deeper down, until a day comes when the waters no longer *try* to find their way. So far as that well is concerned, the waters fail. Of course, this need not happen if the well be situated in some sheltered valley, defended by ferns and moss. For in a quiet

place like that birds come in summer days to stir its surface, to flutter about it and bathe and drink. But the kind of well which is like the soul of a man is a well which stands by the wayside. And, for such a well to be allowed to remain stagnant and idle is already for it to begin to die. The dust of one day gathers and sinks ; and then the dust of another day, making it more difficult for the tiny stream to find its way, until at last the water reluctantly, sadly (if water could think and feel) withdraws, seeking some other outlet ; or, so far as we see, its life dies within it. It is *use* which keeps a well in life ; and *there* a well is like the soul of a man. High powers within us recede and die for no more tragic reason than this, that we have not given them play. We have not *called upon* our souls. We have not set ourselves moral tasks which are beyond us, tasks which would have taken us down into ourselves to find our resource in God. The most ruinous influence for the delicate mechanism of the soul is simply the passing of the days without any holy stir.

* * * * *

But it is not thus only that wells run dry. The waters may suddenly fail in a spring as the result of some *subterranean change*, through some shifting far from the surface, through some alteration in the depths and nearer to the sources or nearer to the very source.

In like manner it often happens with the soul. A life suddenly and, so far as strangers see,

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unaccountably, presents a changed aspect to the world. Here was a happy, generous-hearted man, with the accent of kindness always in his voice. You have not seen him for a space of time, when one day you meet. But he is not now what he was. There is a hardness in his voice, a vein of contradiction. You try to get on to the old language, but it won't come. Presently he says something cynical, unbelieving, brutal almost. What has happened? Oh, any one of a thousand things. But this may have happened. He may in the interval have gone through some experience which has shifted the very basis of his life. He may have been deceived by someone whom he trusted. Or his love may have been betrayed. He may have discovered something dreadful in someone. Or he may have discovered something dreadful in himself. But something may have happened which so shook the elements and foundations of his life that, when you saw him again, they had either not found a new equilibrium or they had settled down in such a way as to congeal and obstruct the generous fountain of his life. Certainly such things do take place. A well ceases to flow and a human heart ceases to portray the holy and generous qualities of kindness and belief and loving services, as the result of some shock or dislocation in a region deeper than the surface, in the region of its more cherished sentiments, somewhere near to the back and source of things.

III

Once again a well may run dry, and, from being a sweet and indeed holy thing by the wayside, may become a ruin and an eyesore—as the result of *the behaviour of the passers-by*. They may throw in mud and stones. And so, in this world of living, God-created things, the life in human souls may be embarrassed and hindered and slain by the unfeeling brutality of men. Wells may be closed and choked, as were the wells of my text, by the hands of the Philistines, by the hands of those who, whether they know it or not, are the true and only enemies of God.

It may be by positive evil-doing, as when a sinful man in pursuit of animal indulgence brings ruin and a hell of remorse into another life. But it may be by evil courses less criminal and less dramatic. We may blast the life of a soul by our malice, by our evil-speaking. Or we may depress the generous life of another's spirit by the display of our contempt. By our suspicion, by our unreasonable anger, by the very tone of our voice, by a certain quality in the glance of our eye, we may drive the soul of another back upon itself and roll a stone against the door of its life.

And then, to touch upon another aspect: just as there are social conditions, hard evil circumstances and conventions, of such a kind that they hinder the proper life of *other* people, occupations, dwelling-houses where cheeks grow pale and life runs low,

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so there are social conditions in which the daily tendency is to seal up the holier side of life.

These, then, are some of the ways by which the waters in a well begin to fail—by neglect and the accumulated dust of the way, or by some profound dislocation beneath the surface, or by the hand of the Philistines, by the brutality, that is to say, of man.

But if it is by these ways that the higher sentiments are withered or blasted, then obviously we shall at least be doing something to keep the wells running if we take precautions against those very things.

IV

Neglect was the first cause we noted as leading to the failure of that well which is our soul with God as its source. The opposite of neglect is attention. If neglect tends to cut us off from God, attention may do something to bring back the flow of the higher life. By attention in these deepest matters I mean prayer. I mean confession. I mean the daily confronting of myself with my own highest conception of life. I mean, by attention, the steady holding of my soul to its own highest moment. The unflinching demand upon myself that I shall live now in these actual days as I know I shall wish I had lived when I come to die—if God in that day give me time to think. By attention,

in the matter of my soul and its relation to God, I mean exactly what I should mean if I spoke of attention to a small plot of ground on which I was trying to raise something. I should mean watering it in dry weather and taking precautions against weeds. I should mean a daily loving vigilance over it or over myself.

Now I can hear someone saying at this point: "But really I have no time! Life being what it is to-day, how is one to find time for religion at all?" Well, but we must all find time! And if your heart is in it you will find time. There is nothing so elastic as time. Time is, it seems to me, the one thing we can make. I never accept from myself the excuse that I have no time to do something which I ought to do. When I say to myself that I have no time I know that what I ought really to be saying to myself is that I don't want to do it. When God sends me a fine mood for work I seem to have time for everything. But if I am having a lazy fit, do not come to me! I shall tell you—and in a sense it will be true—that I am being worked to death.

But indeed, to keep the well of our soul in flood does not require time so much as sincerity. A minute will do, though an hour would be none too much. But if the minute be really a minute of prayer, of reality, of a tender entreaty towards God, it will be enough. It will cast its light, its peace and concentration of power, behind it and in front. Its influence will accompany us down

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the street, just as we can hum a tune to ourselves, and far from that tune interfering with our business, it actually adds to our resources. A minute is not too much and can surely be spared in the busiest life. But the neglect of that minute, if repeated for a time, may in imperceptible ways deflect the secret stream, leaving our soul harder and more secular.

With regard to those profound dislocations and catastrophes which often change the current of a well or of a life, I will say only these things. (For a human soul is not a well though they have things in common ; and anything which is merely physical can never really illustrate the working of the soul.)

It is true that a dislocation *in nature* may leave a well dry, turning its current elsewhere. But that need never happen in the case of a soul. No catastrophe in our experience has the right to turn our soul away from God. Every such catastrophe ought to have the opposite effect and has had all through the history of faith. I cannot conceive of any human sorrow or tragedy or betrayal justifying any man or woman in turning away from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot conceive of any disaster in the region of our emotions casting doubt or suspicion upon the love and compassion of the Saviour of the world. On the contrary, if there is one thing which should take us to His breast it is just that He in His beautiful love is so different from everything that is base or unkind in human hearts.

V

But I must hasten to conclude. Sometimes a well fails because it is *frozen*. Sometimes hearts lose their tenderness, their faith, their spirit of reconciliation and obedience, in consequence of the hard cold spirit of the world. What wells are frozen in others by the coldness of our hearts! And if that be so, what wells might be let loose everywhere were our hearts warm with love and kindness! Yes, kindness. Kindness is the cause of God in this great fierce world. What wells it has the power to unloose!

Had you ever the experience of someone coming to you, asking you to forgive him for a wrong which perhaps you did not even know he had done you? In that case you will remember what a well of love, of forgiveness, was let loose within you! How at the moment it was so great as almost to choke you! It did really make speech impossible; there was such a flood passing through your heart.

And then, what new powers we are aware of within ourselves when we are in the midst of those who believe in us! And how a dumb spirit settles down upon us when we are in the presence of cold and unbelieving souls!

There is an atmosphere which freezes and puts to death; such unkindness is a form of murder. And there is on the other hand an atmosphere which melts and brings to life. We are all of us at all times creating the atmosphere which we ourselves and

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others must breathe. And kindness, like the summer brings back into the grey skies of this world the "sunshine and the swallows and the flowers."

* * * * *

What was the mission of Jesus Christ but just a mission and a message of kindness? He knew how to let loose the well of God's life in the hearts of men. And what was His method? For it must be ours. I can best answer by telling you an old story.

"Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came unto Him; and He sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto Him, 'Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou?' This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not. So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them: 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.' And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none

but the woman, He said unto her, 'Woman, where are thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?' She said, 'No man, Lord.' And Jesus said unto her, 'Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.' "

That was kindness, pure, unqualified kindness. It was Jesus digging again the wells which His Father had digged. It was Jesus removing the stones with which the Philistines had stopped the well.

And what was the result of that kindness of Jesus? Oh, this was the result.

In all probability she became Mary, who broke the box of spikenard over the feet of Jesus, and wept there. She became the Mary who stood by the Cross of Jesus while strong men, who had not her secret, fled. She was the Mary who came to the tomb to anoint His body; and there, first of all human souls, saw Christ risen from the dead.

That was the result—the water in the well began its flow, running pure and clear from its source in the heart of God. And as it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

REV. JAMES BLACK, D.D.

*REV. JAMES MACDOUGALL BLACK,
D.D.*

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THE TRUE SUPERMAN

REV. JAMES BLACK, D.D.

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Romans viii, 37.

WITHOUT doubt one of the master terms of the Christian dictionary is the word "to overcome." Conquest and victory express the high ideal of the Christian life. We cannot fail to notice, for instance, that the New Testament is rich with gracious promises for the soul that overcomes. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." Just because Jesus Himself overcame the world we are called in His strength to do the same. It is a gospel of *victory*.

This does not mean that our Lord glories in the "strong man," as we count men strong. Nor does it suggest that He makes a special appeal to the resolute and the gifted. Rather is it the opposite. If He makes any special appeal to one class more than another it is to the weak and the broken that He speaks! But the glory of His religion is that He can make strength out of weakness and heroes out of cowards. By His message and His grace He leads the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and He bestows on the ungifted the inheritance of the sons of God.

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This message of victory—present and future triumph—is not offered to any of us who think ourselves strong, but to all of us who know ourselves to be weak.

The words in which the Apostle expresses this ideal of Christian victory at once suggest the notion of life as a *battle*. There is a field of extended warfare, a far-flung battle-line, where opposing forces struggle for mastery. We picture at once the massed ranks of an enemy, who straddles across our way to do battle for our soul. . . . Out of his own experience, with bitter memories, Paul labels some of these battalions with well-known names. Here is Tribulation ; there Distress. On this side there is Persecution ; on that side the gaunt twins Famine and Want. On the left is Nakedness ; on the right Peril ; in front a Sword. His list, though long, is incomplete. These are but types, and under these types we are expected to group all the temptations, trials, difficulties and sins which make onset against our soul. . . . Then when the Apostle has made up his list (a hard and testing list it is !), this is his ringing answer : “ In all these things—and as many more as you care to add—we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” This is clear exultation !

I

This is the ideal, I say, as clear as sunlight. Would that it were the reality ! Alas ! we who

believe in Jesus and call Him Lord have more often to confess defeat than glory in victory. Instead of vanquishing, we are vanquished. Temptations unresisted, trials unmet, sins unpurged, mark our lives as with scars. We are pitifully *less* than conquerors—and that *in spite* of Him Who loved us !

And should it be otherwise, even should we win through, how often is our victory gained only with infinite toil and agony—gained with little to spare—gained, as we say, by the skin of the teeth. After some desperate struggle we just manage to hold the sin off. We shut our eyes that we may not see it ; we clench our hands that we may not grasp it. We are saved often not by will but by fortune. We are helped not by ourselves but by our friends. We win not by the power of good but by the fear of evil. Sometimes we win by showing a clean pair of heels ! And on the whole we just manage to wriggle through on the right side.

Now I am not decrying this narrow and painful victory. It is better to win by the skin of the teeth than not at all. God Himself knows that in many a man's case this desperate tussle and slim victory are more noble than the easy triumph of some man so temperamentally gifted that he has only to raise a lordly hand. When we think of how some men are placed, when we remember their social and educational disadvantages, when we think of the fearful odds they have to meet and the terrible array of besetting temptations they have to face—the heredity, the environment, the ridicule

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they have to endure—when we recall all this and more, then we can only thank God that such a man wins through at all. It is something indeed that he gets a struggling hand on a rock and manages to haul himself panting on the shore. There is not one of us but knows some such *hero of God*, who keeps the enemy down only by never taking his hand from its throat, who maintains his loyalty to Christ by a watching that is unceasing and a struggle that is unrelenting ! And Jesus, Who knows all things, will one day award that man all honour ; for his greatness lies in this, that amid leaping devils he managed just to keep his feet and stand !

II

All honour to such men ! Yet in spite of our admission, it is safe to say that this skin-of-the-teeth victory is not the Christian ideal. When we remember the infinite resources of strength and power which Christ has to offer us, it surely does little honour to our Master that so many of us, even in His name, only manage to *scrape through*.

Let me ask you to notice Paul's view of what Christian victory is. We translate his word from the original Greek as "more than conquerors." That is good enough, and for practical purposes exact enough ; but it does not give the subtle

meaning of his native phrase. His word means literally "to conquer excessively," to conquer abundantly, to conquer with a great deal to spare, with a mastery and a reserve strength never quite called out. The contrast here is obvious—on the one hand a man who conquers with the last ounce torn out of him, and on the other hand one who triumphs with ease and with reserve strength, with a great deal in hand. Such a man is truly "more than a conqueror"—winning not with the last gasp but with a kind of ease and surety that give the impression of large unexhausted power behind. He has something always "in hand."

Whatever our Christian practice may be, this at least is the Christian ideal. It expresses the result which Christ should exercise on our lives. If we are one with Him, we fight not with our own might alone but with His. And what is there in all Paul's list—or any other man's list—that is stronger than Jesus? Who or what can separate us from the love of Jesus? Shall tribulation or distress? Persecution or famine? Nakedness, peril, or the sword? Nay, in all these things, through Him that loved us, *we conquer excessively*.

To see what this ideal type of victory means, I wish to contrast three "samples" of overwhelming victory, as we see them illustrated in the lives of men who prove themselves more than conquerors. I shall give them in an ascending scale

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III

The first type of overwhelming victory is that which we see so often effected—victory by devastation. An enemy sweeps over another nation, like a horde of Assyrians, ruins the land and puts the people to the sword, leaving only a tragic desolation. It is a great type of victory, magnificent in its thoroughness. History has shown us many excessive triumphs like this. That indeed is the type of conquest which Russia once exercised over Poland. It ruled by the iron heel and by the use of all oppressive and repressive measures. It was an excessive victory ; but it was a tragic thing.

Now, in the spiritual life there is a good type of victory marvellously akin to this. We discover some enemy in our life, and we make up our minds for a perfect conquest. But often we win only by this law of devastation. You find a striking parallel, say, in the case of a reformed drunkard. The man, perhaps, has awakened to his shame, and he resolves in Jesus to master his sin. He conquers the evil powers arrayed against him—praise God !—but in countless cases he gains the day only by the doctrine of the “ iron heel.” He crushes and smothers every instinct or suggestion that would lead him into the zone of danger. He learns, as Russia learned, that his only safety lies in devastating a certain part of his life. He binds his unsleeping instincts in chains. He manfully cuts off the hand and plucks out the eye that have played the mischief with his

soul, and that might tempt him again to his undoing. A strong man, by Christ's aid, may well conquer in this clean-cut fashion—conquer indeed with reserve power, conquer magnificently. But though it is magnificent, the man knows in his heart that it is literally conquest by devastation, by laying whole stretches of his nature under the iron heel. He is saved by his chains! Thank God for the power in him to use these chains.

This is noble and magnificent. Would to God that more of us could do it! Such a man is indeed "more than a conqueror." But is it the best? We should be fools to despise it or sneer at it. But is it the best?

IV

The second type of "excessive victory" is a stage higher. For there is a method of triumph by which we may not only conquer our foes completely—as completely as the former—but may also, by judicious treatment of them, turn them in time into our allies and helpers and friends. We may win them to our side and our heart.

This type of magnificent victory is strikingly illustrated in the history of our own little island home. We know that the Normans conquered the Saxons and ruled them for some generations: but the rule was so kindly that for centuries the Norman and the Saxon have been inextricably welded together.

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In an ideal sense this is a finer and higher type of victory. For it turns what might have been (and once was) its enemy into its friend. On the spiritual plane there is a glorious type of excessive victory peculiarly parallel to this. For it is possible, through Him that loved us, so to deal with the qualities, the native tendencies, the human aptitudes which originally proved our undoing, that they end by becoming our strength.

Take the example of this very man Paul of whom we are speaking. We know that in his unregenerate days it was his obstinacy and his hot-headed zeal which first led him into his passionate persecution of Jesus. But when he was won for God he became so much of a conqueror that he used and harnessed these dangerous gifts for the work of his greatest glory. He did not need to strangle the powers that had once led him astray; but he used them and consecrated them in his excessive victory.

So, too, with a man like Peter. Any child knows that it was this disciple's blundering rashness and his mingled courage and fear that led him into his worst sins as a disciple. Another man might have argued, "I shall crush this unholy and impetuous boldness lest it lead me again into sin. I must cut this out, and must devastate this part of my nature. For in that lies my danger." But when he received the Holy Ghost, the glory of Peter lies in this—he became so much of a conqueror that instead of needing to bridle his tongue and restrain his emotions,

he used these, consecrated, for the glory of God. Truly an excessive victory.

That is being "more than a conqueror" with a vengeance! That is turning the enemy's guns on himself! Conquest by devastation is great, sometimes superb; but surely it is a more triumphant thing not to crush and chain the qualities that have previously misled us, but to use them for our best good and service, and harness them for the ends of our soul.

This is high; but though high, we must admit that in Jesus our Lord it is possible. And not only possible! For it has been done, magnificently done, by thousands who in Jesus have been "more than conquerors."

There is a striking parable of this in the Old Testament. Baasha built the fortress of Ramah over against Jerusalem to hold King Asa in check. The fortress dominated all Judah and threatened their peace. But King Asa, by an artifice, managed to draw Baasha into the north to meet another foe. The people of Judah, in the interval, went out and razed the fortress to the ground. But that was not enough; for if they left the timbers and stones there, Baasha might have returned and rebuilt the place of danger. So we read that the men of Judah went out and carried the sticks and stones back to Jerusalem, and *out of that material* they built a new fortress of their own beside the city! . . . That is the great secret. Use the powers that once hurt you, for your glory. That is excessive victory!

THE TRUE SUPERMAN

V

But there is a higher form of excessive victory even than that. It is so high that I only know of one person in all human history who ever fully attained it. Some men attain it partially, as it were, in certain departments of their life. But no one except Jesus has ever realised it in all things. Yet, in spite of this, if we are ever to strive to be like Jesus, *it must be our ideal!*

Let me state it. I know well that when I state it some of you may call it a paradox, a blunt contradiction in terms. It is this—the highest type of conquest is seen only in him who can conquer without striking a blow, who can win his fight without fighting! No doubt you ask if it is possible to speak of conquest where no battle has been fought. May I seek to show you that the only perfect conqueror is he who never *needs* to fight at all? He alone is the supreme instance of one who is “more than a conqueror.”

The prowess of Napoleon was so great that on one occasion when he marched against an enemy all opposition faded before him like a mist before the sun; and he marched through the length of the land without striking a blow. That in itself was a far more signal triumph than if he had won a Marengo or an Austerlitz. His power was never so superb; this was the biggest proof of his greatness.

Now, through Him that loved us, there may be a similar state in the human soul. If we have the

strength of the Lord in us we may conquer so excessively that we too, in meeting the enemies of our soul, need never strike a blow.

To show that this is no far-fetched dream, may I ask you to notice how this high ideal is possible for most men in certain special spheres? As we know, there are some men so scrupulously honourable that the temptation to *tell a lie* is really no temptation at all. If it comes, because of their native honour, the temptation makes no appeal and causes no anguish. They do not need to fight—they conquer excessively.

There are men and women too (many, no doubt, who hear me now) to whom the temptation to *drink* or to *gluttonous excess* makes no appeal. There is no inherited taint, no induced craving, no agonising struggle. They simply brush the suggestion aside as being either a vulgar or ignoble thing. They conquer—with infinite resources in hand—without needing to lift their finger in battle. For they live on a plane of soul (I do not mean a mere temperament, but a plane of soul) where the suggestion wields no power or seduction.

In the same way, I can conceive of a man so honest that though he were left with piles of gold, knowing that none could either see him or call him to account, so honest that the temptation to *steal* would have no weight with him. Another man might play with the gold and dally with it, finger it and hunger for it; and then, after a struggle, he might put it from him and resist the suggestion.

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A good victory, won through agony ! But this other man lives on such a plane of soul that the temptation of theft leaves him cold. He wins without a battle—more than a conqueror.

Now, if we take what we thus see effected in certain spheres and departments, and apply it all round—not to this one thing or that one thing, not to this particular and to that particular, but to the whole sweep of human life—we shall see something of the Christian ideal of excessive victory. This is a picture of the ideal man in Christ, the man who lives as fully as possible on the plane of mind and soul which was Christ's. If only we could make this dream ours ! If only we could attain to a type of victory like that—"more than conquerors."

* * * * *

Is it only an ideal ? Perhaps beyond any human attainment ? If it were it would not be worth preaching, least of all to broken men and women such as you and I are. But at least we may say this—that it is an ideal that may be more and more realised, bit by bit attained, by daily faithfulness and daily union with Jesus, until at the end "we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." For the perfect way to conquer evil is to have the heart so set on good and so pledged to Christ that temptations cease to have an insistent appeal. That is the highest type of excessive victory—winning without a battle.

How shall it be done ? . Well, one might

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mention this or that, one might add counsel to counsel, but it all amounts to this. I prophesy this overwhelming victory, be the temptation what it may, for that man who is so close to Jesus that he can say with the Apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

And the perfect thing is to be able to add, like him. "I do not frustrate the grace of God."

REV. J. C. CARLILE, C.B.E., D.D.

*REV. JOHN CHARLES CARLILE,
C.B.E., D.D.*

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THE GOOD FIGHT

REV. JOHN CHARLES CARLILE, C.B.E., D.D.

"Fight the good fight of faith." 1 Timothy vi, 12.

ST. PAUL'S Christian experience was a long campaign, he was always at war with evil ; while he knew in his inner life the peace of God that passeth all understanding, he was ever busy pushing further out the frontiers of the Kingdom. His association with the army made him familiar with military thought and forms of expression. He often wrote in the language of a soldier. He described faith as a gift of God to be received with gratitude, as a work, an effort demanding energy ; here he presents faith as a fight.

It is sometimes supposed that belief is the easiest thing in the world, it is conceived as mental haziness or laziness, shutting the eyes to the grim facts of life, following the line of least resistance, attempting to acquiesce in what one knows is not true. Yet religious faith is nothing of the kind. It is not a denial of reason. It goes all the way with reason, and then walks on ahead. It demands that a man should hold himself with a tight hand, taking the risks and responding to the obligations. Faith is usually a difficult habit of mind. Perhaps it was not intended that it should be a simple and easy matter. It is a challenge, a test.

THE GOOD FIGHT

I

Faith is a fight against the seeming. Faith believes reverently and intelligently that a good God is governing the world, that His relation to His children is that of our Father in Heaven. We are familiar with the sweet winsomeness of the representations of the loving Father in the words of Jesus. God is very tender and pitiful. While he is the All-Wise, All-Powerful, He is the Father. His heart beats true to His little children. Whatever can be done to add value to life He is sure to do. He is not an arbitrary judge. He does the best for each and for all. There is no haphazard in His government, no gaps in His knowledge. We live in a world that is intelligent and purposeful because God is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That is our faith.

Let us look round upon the things we see. "It does not yet appear that all things are put under Him." It would seem that no wise government is directing the world's course, that everything depends on the luck of the game and the strength of the man of the hour. There is no department of life in which we are not called to walk by faith and not by sight. We are continually challenged to fight the good fight of faith against the things that seem to be.

We are familiar with faith in Providence. It is very beautiful and comforting. It is definitely set out in the Scriptures. "The steps of the good man are ordered of the Lord." We recall the words of

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Jesus concerning the sparrow, God's odd bird, but not forgotten. We have lingered over reading the good news that "all things work together for good for them that love God."

We have sung with the Quaker poet :

" I know not where his islands lift
Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

That is our faith, but does it correspond with actual experience? Is it what we see or simply a contrast born of the devout imagination? It is not easy to maintain one's hold upon the belief that God is in His heaven and all is right with the world. Faith believes that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, that "to live is Christ and to die is gain." We sing :

" Here in the body pent,
Absent from Thee I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent,
A day's march nearer home."

As we stand by the open grave and hear the sublime words of comfort : " I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord. He that believeth on me though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever believeth on me shall never die." But our eyes are upon the grave and " we long for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice

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that is still." Faith is a great affirmation that the things that are seen are not the real, but that the things that are invisible are the actual.

II

Faith is a fight against appetite. Faith says : Live for to-morrow. Go through the darkness of the night for the sake of the dawn. Climb the steep heights for the view that you have not yet seen, that shall be obtained from the top. Appetite says : Have all you can to-day ; there may be no to-morrow, and the hunger of nature should be satisfied here and now to the full. The animal in us, the survival of countless years, is ever ready to spring up and to snatch that which it desires. It follows the senses. Seeing is believing. It is under the tyranny of the optic nerve. Faith puts up a brave fight against the lower desires. It struggles to keep hold of the best. Christ's teaching is so good that it ought to be true, but it only becomes true for the individual through faith.

Think of the fight against despair which many brave souls wage all their lives. There are crowds of disciples making a glorious defence against their weakness, struggling with the thorn in the flesh that never ceases to rankle and to smart. They are represented by R. L. Stevenson, with a hole in his lung and fever in every limb, gathering his friends and household in the morning before his death,

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in his far-away Samoan home, to pray: "The day returns and brings with it the petty round of irritating concerns. Help us to play the man. Help us to perform our duties with laughter and kind faces. Let cheerfulness abound with industry. Give us to go blithely on our business each day, and bring us to our resting-place weary but undishonoured, and grant us in the end the gift of sleep."

It is no small achievement to maintain the spirit of gladness in the conflict. Most of us limp along the road with grim seriousness. Yet there is an element of joyous romance in the conflict. Faith is a manly thing intended for the open air and the rough ways of life. Cromwell's Ironsides went into battle with a song. Lord Shaw of Dumfermline declared that the motto of his life was to turn every trouble into an adventure. Few can rise to that ideal. The strain of standing up to the desperate handicap has a weakening effect and can only be overcome by faith in God enabling us to realise that "underneath are the everlasting arms." The conflict is by no means hopeless. "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart."

The enemy is multiple and mighty. Ours is not a conflict with mere flesh and blood, but with the despotisms, the empires, the forces that control this dark world. It is the greatest blunder to underestimate our foes. There is something in the air, however it may be described, that is poisonous to the ideal. For the majority it is impossible to live a clean straight life without sometimes having to

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fight hard. The saints of God did not discover that the narrow way was an easy road. All through the ages they have had to contend for the faith. Into the conflict they have put their whole strength that they might be victorious. Our Lord Jesus did not promise His disciples an armchair and a pair of slippers. They were to carry the cross, to say "No" to themselves. There is no victory without a struggle.

One cannot convince another of spiritual things. Each must learn for himself. Men are not argued into the Kingdom of God. They are born again. Their eyes are opened. If we do not see the Kingdom, that is all there is to be said. But once its presence is realised and we catch a glimpse, though only a glimpse, no fight will be too costly to win through. It is worth more than we have ever known or dreamed. Its pains were more joyous than the pleasures of the world. "We reckon that our light affliction which is but for a moment is not worthy to be compared with the eternal weight of glory."

III

Faith is a good fight. Our warfare is not with flesh and blood. There is no question about the difficulty of the task or the urgent necessity of undertaking it. There is a great door and effectual open to us, and there are many adversaries. Oppor-

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tunities may be measured by opposition. A thing worth doing is never easy. The fight of faith is a fight of which one need not be ashamed. It is a great thing to know that if we must fight, the cause is supremely worth while. You may look the world in the face without apology. The one thing for which a man may lay down his life rather than be defeated and have no regret is his faith.

What is our attitude to this good fight? Do we look on in a neutral mood.

“What think ye of Christ, friend, when all is done and said,

Like you this Christianity or not?

It may be false, but would you have it true?

Has it your vote to be so if it can?”

That is the crux of the whole thing. What is our relationship to the fight? Are we in it? Do we long for the victory? If so, we shall not find it fail. It is not without a history. It may be traced through the ages from the days of Jesus until now. Men have sacrificed everything that they might engage in this warfare, and in their moments of agony and seeming defeat they have shouted victory. In the fight itself they have found inspiration and exhilaration. They have rejoiced in their sufferings and counted their scars as marks of distinction. No fight has been so glorious. Those who have looked on have spoken of sacrifice, but those in the turmoil of the conflict counted it an honour even to lay down life itself.

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There have been countless wars which cannot be defended. They were blunders when they were not crimes. Their motive and method will not bear scrutiny. Ambition, lust of power, treachery, have been the poisoned springs. There are not many wars one would care to defend, but the age-long fight between good and evil, the fight of faith, is a great fight in which one may take part unashamed. It is good in itself. There is no apologia to be written. The cause needs no defence. It is right and just. A man ought to fight this fight, not for promise of reward or personal advantage, but because it is supremely worthy.

There has been too much advocacy of virtue based upon reward. We are to do right because it is right, to speak the truth because it is the truth, to follow the beautiful for the sake of beauty. If Christ had nothing to give, it would be our duty and our delight to follow Him all the way. This conflict is intrinsically good for those who take part in it. It makes the soul greater. There is some subtle addition to the character that changes its quality and increases its stature.

There are experiences through which it is impossible to pass and remain the same. They change everything. Life becomes a different thing to those who have looked into the face of death. It is impossible to go through the experiences of real war without losing something of the bloom of the soul. The glamour of battle has been made beautiful by novelists and idealised by poets. The glory of the

trenches became a platitude except to the men who were there. To them it was mud and blood, a horrible business, an interregnum in life which ought never to have been. Somebody's crime or blunder, a devil's sport, but nothing which possessed redeeming power. War is not a short cut to a millennium, it does not regenerate character. It takes the sacredness from life and gives a recklessness and brutality all to be deplored. Not so the fight of which we speak.

The fight of faith is the conquest of the lower nature, killing the animal in the soul. There can be no defeat to the man who follows the Christ. The New Testament is the literature of courage, the book of great victories, the record of the only religion in the world which gives assurance of victory. How wonderfully the disciples of Jesus grew under His influence; as they fought their fight the little commonplace men became great. They manifested qualities no one expected to find, developed capacities which more than surprised the world. It is ever so. The fight of faith greatens those who take part in it. It is the material out of which ideals are shaped. It lifts the soul to a higher plane. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The heart cannot be content with any working theory of life which belittles human nature and takes inspiration out of heroic effort.

The dawn of the day of victory is not yet, though it may be nearer than we dream. The Kingdom must come.

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“These things shall be ; a loftier race
Than e’er the world hath known shall rise,
With flame of freedom in their souls,
And light of knowledge in their eyes.

“They shall be gentle, brave and strong,
To spili no drop of blood, but dare
All that may plant man’s lordship firm
On earth and fire, and sea and air.”

There need be no doubt as to the nature of the faith. It is reliance on Jesus Christ, accepting Him as God manifest in the flesh, the One “Who loved us and gave Himself for us.” This is the witness of the great souls who trod the mystic way, “the friends and aiders of those who live in the Spirit.” They speak in many languages, they are called by different names, but they are one in their testimony to the power of faith in the personal Christ. From St. Paul to Catherine Booth, all the radiant company confess that the strength by which they lived was not their own, but derived from God’s dear Son. Their testimony should have value for our age. There will be no victory apart from living faith that unites the soul to Jesus Christ. Even religion becomes irreligious if it be separated from faith.

It is glorious to realise that all we require for living the life that is life indeed is within our reach. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” All action involves faith. Belief is the connection between the dynamo and the lamp. The Arab proverb is true : “The strength of the

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heart is from the soundness of the faith." Professor James puts it in a sentence. "Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will half create the fact." Let us take heart of grace, trust Christ and fight the good fight of faith.

THE VERY REV. W. R. INGE, D.D., C.V.O., F.B.A.

*THE VERY REV. WILLIAM RALPH
INGE, D.D., C.V.O., F.B.A.*

DEAN of St. Paul's. Dean Inge is the eldest son of the late Rev. William Inge, D.D., Provost of Worcester College, Oxford, and of Mary, daughter of the Venerable Edward Churton, Archdeacon of Cleveland. Educated at Eton and passing on to King's College, Cambridge, he gained many distinctions, becoming Senior Chancellor's Medalist in 1883 and Hare Prizeman in 1885. He was formerly Assistant Master at Eton, Fellow and Tutor of Hertford College, Oxford; Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity and Hon. Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge. He has been Select Preacher at both Oxford and Cambridge, and has been successively chosen as Bampton Lecturer; Paddock Lecturer, New York; Gifford Lecturer, St. Andrews; and Romanes and Hibbert Lecturer. Amongst his publications are: "Christian Mysticism," "The Philosophy of Plotinus," "Outspoken Essays," "The Idea of Progress," "The Victorian Age."

WARFARE, DEVILISH AND DIVINE

THE VERY REV. WILLIAM RALPH INGE,
D.D., C.V.O., F.B.A.

"Take unto you the whole armour of God."

Ephesians vi, 13.

IT is difficult to realise that it is only six years to-day since the last shot was fired in the Great War. The long nightmare has become a "portion and parcel of the dreadful past." To many of us it remains chiefly as the sudden stroke which cut our lives into two parts, and the happier times before 1914 are already becoming misty and unreal. But we do remember the vicissitudes of the last months of the war—the well-grounded fear that the blockade of our coasts might attain its terrible object—the severe defeats in the spring, and then the check to the enemy's advance, which at first seemed only a slight recoil in the swaying line, such as we had often heard of before. Only by degrees towards the end of the summer, it dawned upon us that this was really the beginning of the end, that the hitherto invincible German army was at last crumbling. We could hardly believe it, till the defection of our chief enemy's allies showed that the mighty power which had defied the world was no longer

able to punish desertion—that it was broken and helpless.

And what was in our minds, after we had offered our thanks to God for our deliverance? Let me quote to you the words of President Wilson at the Royal Banquet on December 28th, 1918: "We have used the great words *right* and *justice*, and now we are to prove whether or not we understand those words, and how they are to be applied to the settlement which must conclude this war. And we must not only understand them, but we must have the courage to act upon our understanding. Yet, after I have uttered the word *courage*, it comes into my mind that it would take more courage to resist the great moral tide now running in the world than to yield to it, to obey it. There is a great tide running in the hearts of men. The hearts of men have never beaten so singularly in unison before. Men have never before been so conscious of their brotherhood. Men have never before realised how little difference there was between right and justice in one latitude and in another, under one sovereign and under another; and it will be our high privilege, I believe, sir, not only to apply the moral judgments of the world to the particular settlements which we shall attempt, but also to organise the moral force of the world to preserve those settlements, to steady the forces of mankind, and to make the right and the justice to which great nations like our own have devoted themselves the predominant and controlling force of the world."

I

It sounds like bitter mockery to quote these words to-day. Yet they were not empty rhetoric. They were the sincere words of a Christian idealist, not well versed in the cynical politics of the Old World, but not, *at that moment*, out of touch with realities. For there was, in the months after the Armistice, a real vision of a possible better world. There was a deep repentance and shame, a resolve that the passions and ambitions which had brought Europe to ruin should not again sway the destinies of nations; there was an hour of hope and a consciousness of brotherhood among the peoples who had so long been grappling in mortal strife. This revulsion against the ideas and ideals of militarism was very strong, not only among ourselves but in Germany, though our lying newspapers said nothing about it.

But it all came to nothing. The Prince of this world would not let go his prey so easily. Europe was once again stretched upon the rack, and the screws were once again turned. The American idealist and man of letters was outwitted by a stronger man, whose ideals differed somewhat sharply from his own. "I conceive of life after the war," said M. Clemenceau, "as a continual conflict, whether it be war or peace. I believe it was Bernhardi who said that war is politics conducted by other weapons. We can invert this aphorism and say that peace is war conducted by other

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weapons." The chief difference would seem to be that in war one attacks one's enemies, in peace also one's allies.

This, then, is the end of "the war to end war"—a peace to end peace. Such is the world we have to live in. We are spared the bitterest of all discoveries—that our brave men died in a bad cause. They died in a good cause. But the next bitterest discovery is ours—that in so far as they were fighting to exorcise the spirit of Machiavelli and Bernhardi, they seem to have fought and died in vain. That accursed spirit is no monopoly of any one nation, still less of any form of government. Democracy and autocracy are tarred with the same brush.

What is the cause of it all? Countless books have been written lately about the psychology of war. The new sciences have been called in to help; but it cannot be said that a satisfactory answer has been found. St. James, as we remember, has a very simple explanation: "From whence come wars and fighting among you? Even of your lusts which war in your members." This was also the view of Ruskin. "The cause of war is simply that most men are thieves." But this is too simple. None of the nations went to war in 1914 because they were thieves. We, for example, went to war not because we had anything to gain, but chiefly because we had everything to lose, and feared isolation. Germany and Russia went to war mainly as an antidote to revolution at home. The causes of wars are very complex. Some of them we may

hope to combat successfully ; others, it must be feared, lie very deep among the roots of human nature.

II

I am not sure whether any valid analogy can be drawn between the life of the individual and the life of the race. If it can, I think that there is hope that war is a disease of our nonage, and may be outgrown. "Man was only born yesterday," says Maurice Maeterlinck, "and has scarcely yet even begun to disentangle himself from chaos." A French psychologist says that the human boy is most pugnacious between nine and twelve, and that perhaps the human race is just at that stage now. It is certainly true that the lowest savages are not very warlike, and that war, like cannibalism, begins with the higher savagery. Cannibalism we have already outgrown ; war we may outgrow. It has also been pointed out that in the animal world organised war is known only among bees and ants, the creatures which have established an industrial civilisation with stores of capital, and which suffer from over-population. Unfortunately these two species live under a highly developed state socialism, so that our radical reformers cannot get much comfort from their example. But, in fact, I distrust all these analogies.

We can, however, protest, in the name of common sense as well as religion, against those who maintain

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that war is not an evil. There was far too much of this nonsense in the last century. In the humane eighteenth century representative men were, in theory at least, against war. But in the nineteenth "fervent Christians like De Maistre, philosophers like Hegel, advanced social reformers like Proudhon, emotional rhetoricians like Ruskin, though they might possibly allow that war itself was an evil, were equally with Moltke and the militarists, lost in admiration for its magnificent results" (Havelock Ellis). We are less surprised to find Moltke writing, ten years after the victory of 1870: "Eternal peace is a dream, and not even a beautiful dream. War is a part of God's world order. In war are developed the noblest virtues of mankind: courage and sacrifice, fidelity and the willingness to sacrifice life itself. Without war the world would be swallowed up in materialism." It is hardly necessary to point out that Germany, which as a weak, divided and pacific nation had led the world in music, theology and idealistic philosophy, was never so "swallowed up in materialism" as after the successful wars through which this grim old soldier had guided her. It is no use to try to cast out devils by Beelzebub.

I will give you only one more quotation, this time from M. Elie Faure, who has himself been a champion of war. "Man is above all an artist. He rejects only those forms of art which are exhausted. The desire of perpetual peace will not kill this form of art unless the conditions of peace involve a new method of warfare, with the same sudden and

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collective intoxication, the same shining responsibilities, the same creative risks, the same atmosphere of voluntarily accepted tragedy."

Do not these words explain why St. Paul was so fond of comparing the Christian life to a warfare, enumerating with loving care all the soldier's accoutrements for attack and defence, and finding their spiritual equivalents? Do they not explain why the Church has always cherished this analogy, so that even in the Baptismal service the infant promises through its sureties to be Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end? Do they not explain the success of militant religious leaders like Ignatius of Loyola and General Booth?

In the language of the new psychology, we want to *sublimate* our native pugnacity rather than to repress it. We want to find a moral equivalent for war, which will evoke the same noble instincts and emotions as warfare, without its ruinous results. And this moral equivalent is surely provided by enlisting under Christ's banner and fighting manfully against sin, the world and the flesh.

III

We must realise frankly that the powers of evil are much stronger than most of us suppose them to be. We must realise that civilisation, with all its intellectual and spiritual treasures, is in danger,

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and that the Church of Christ is on its trial. The call that has come to us is a call to arms, with the curse of Meroz upon those who will not come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The age of comfort and security, with its obvious advantages and its subtle dangers, is over. A new and obscure path lies before us. Like Joshua's warriors, we have not passed this way before. We know our enemies—Machiavelli and his disciples abroad; not nations, but ideas, are the foes of this country—and at home all the disintegrating tendencies which have been let loose by the war, faction and class animosity, self-indulgence and luxury in some quarters, above all, that dissolution of all moral authority which regards the stored wisdom of the race, the ripe experience of thousands of years, as a set of antiquated tabus. Our young people have eaten of the tree of knowledge, and they have lost faith and reverence, Knowledge without faith automatically turns man out of Paradise. Temptation glides in like a serpent, whispering, "Thou shalt not surely die." The moral traditions, which gave us the best safeguard against sin—that of being shocked at it—are being sedulously and insidiously undermined. "These having no law are a law to themselves," and the passions grant dispensations more easily than the most accommodating priest.

"Therefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore."

It is a call to arms—the same call, may we not say, that summoned the flower of our country to the battlefield nine years ago. They saved their country from a foreign enemy. We have to save it from itself. Let us remember their loyalty, their courage, their sacrifice, their death, and their victory, and, in a very different sense from that of the cynical Frenchman, let us carry on their warfare with other weapons in time of peace. If God be for us, who shall be against us? Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. “To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

REV. L. RICHARDS, M.A.

REV. LEYTON RICHARDS, M.A.

EDUCATED at Mansfield College, Oxford, he entered the Congregational Ministry and was called to Peterhead, Scotland, in 1906; Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria, in 1910; Bowdon in 1914; and Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, in 1918. In 1919 he returned to Bowdon, and there remained until he was called as successor to Dr. Berry to Carrs Lane, Birmingham, in 1924.

“WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY ?”

REV. LEYTON RICHARDS, M.A.

*“ Our Gospel came not unto you in word only
but also in power.”* 1 Thes. i, 5.

THERE is nothing more familiar to the Western World than Christianity, and yet nothing is more misunderstood. Ask the question “ What is Christianity ? ” even among professing Christians, and we find a diversity of answer from dogmatic certainty at the one extreme to vague generality at the other ; whilst among those who make no Christian profession the variety of answer is as wide as human experience. Christianity for instance is often confused with an ethical code, generally negative, a series of “ Thou shalt not’s,” or it is mistaken for a body of dogma : Mr. Bernard Shaw so mistakes it when he dubs it “ Salvationism.” Or again it may be identified with an economic system as when the Marxian or other social enthusiast claims it for Socialism. There is of course truth in all these points of view ; for Christianity does work out in ethics, in dogma, in economics, indeed in every department of life. But always with these practical expressions of Christian Faith there goes something deeper, something more fundamental because more spiritual, and it is this spiritual element which gives

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to Christianity its distinctive quality, and which cannot be ignored in any proper answer to the question “What is Christianity?”

Let us then try to give an answer to this question which includes all that is true in the popular expressions of Christianity and which yet adds that fundamental spiritual element which these popular expressions overlook.

Obviously Jesus Christ is central to the religion which he founded, and our answer to the question “What is Christianity?” must keep that fact ever in mind. Such answer for convenience can be stated under three heads.

I

Christianity is belief about Christ. This is not the whole of Christianity, but we cannot have Christianity without it. Thus we may believe that Jesus Christ was Man or God, or both at once, “Very God and very Man,” but if Christianity is to be more than a name or a label we must define the meaning of Christ for our own experience. What am I to do with Him, what is His relationship to me and mine to Him, what is the basis of His authority over my life and the life of the world? The answer to these and all such questions means formulated beliefs about Christ.

Think of the history of our Christian faith from this point of view. At the outset Jesus demanded

belief about Himself. "Whom do men say that I am?" He asked. "Whom do ye say that I am?" That is to say He wanted His disciples to define their thoughts in regard to His Person as an essential part of their Christian life. And so later it became necessary for the Church to justify its Christian faith in contact with pagan belief, the world's philosophy, and heresy within its own ranks: John's Gospel and parts of Paul's Epistles are fully understood only in this light. So there came into being a body of Christian doctrine, a system of Theology by which men's belief about Christ—His relation to God, man, time, eternity—were all duly formulated and then scheduled as articles of faith. In this way Christianity came to be identified with a specific creed.

It is this identification which prejudices Christianity to the open mind, for Christianity as a system of belief about Christ seems to be something to be accepted, not questioned, something based on authority, not on experience. Therefore it is necessary to be clear on this point. I am not pleading for subscription to a written creed as a test either of Churchmanship or of Christian discipleship; some Churches require this, others do not. All I plead is this, that while I ought to give heed to what men have believed about Christ in days past (since it registers the thought and experience of sincere Christians), yet if Christianity is to be real for me it must be my thought and my experience, not someone else's, which is the basis of my creed.

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It is in that sense that Christianity is inseparable from belief about Christ.

Nevertheless we must beware of reducing Christianity to just what anyone chooses to think, or believe, or affirm, as Christian Truth. That is to say, Christianity on the intellectual side is not pure subjectivism. On the contrary, the strength of Christianity lies in the fact that at its centre is an objective Truth embodied in the Man Christ Jesus; and so our business is not to hold any view we like and then give it a Christian label, but to explore the Truth in Jesus Christ and relate it to our own life. In this process I may, or may not, express my convictions in the time-honoured formulæ of the Christian creeds. Some people find these adequate, others do not; but however I express my beliefs about Christ, the important thing is that my confession of faith shall be based not merely on authority but also on experience. So then, while Christianity is belief about Christ, yet behind Christian belief there always lies the more vital fact of Christian experience.

II

Christianity is living like Christ. It is easy to see that the reproduction of Christ's life in the world of to-day is the solution of all human problems, personal and social. It is the failure to live like Christ which is the root cause of all the world's

maladies, while on the other hand, as someone has said, "If all men were like Christ, then earth were like Heaven." But there precisely is our difficulty, for it is possible to know the true life and to see it in Jesus Christ and yet not to live it. We feel it to be beyond our human power. We must all agree with Paul's profound psychology in his Epistle to the Romans: "When I would do good, evil is present with me, for I delight in the Law of God in my inmost soul but I see another law in my members bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." Consequently Christianity, if it be construed as living like Christ, demands the impossible; in the strict sense it is impracticable. It is quite futile, for instance, to take a Gospel of "Self-help" to the man who is down-and-out, whether morally or physically; to tell such a man to "live like Christ" is merely to make mockery of his impotence; it is because he has failed so to live that he is where he is. And so in the wider context of the social order, in industry, or politics, or the ordinary intercourse of life. It is easy to prescribe an amelioration, if not a final solution, of our social problems; but the individual meantime is helpless, involved in the "System," or so he seems. What is needed therefore is power to translate the ideal into life, some reinforcement of our personality whereby we can prove our Christianity by actually living like Christ and reacting to the world as He did. An ethical example like that of Jesus is an excellent tonic if we feel it to be within our power, but

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otherwise it merely induces despair and revolt. And so while Christianity includes “belief about Christ” and implies “living like Christ,” yet something further is required if Christianity is to be within the realm of the immediately practicable.

III

Christianity is contact with Christ. This is seen very clearly in the earthly life of Jesus. His first followers became attached disciples through the contagion of His presence, contact with His personality; and then in yielding to that presence miracles were wrought, things which caused men to marvel and which still awake our wonder. Thus commonplace fishermen became Apostles, tax-gatherers were changed into honest citizens, sinners were transformed into saints, vice (as in the “Sick of the Palsy,” a nervous wreck through self-abuse) yielded to virtue; intellectual pride—as in Nicodemus—crept to the feet of Jesus in order to learn; the doubt of Thomas became a magnificent dogmatism; timidity was transmuted into courage, and even the intolerance of the Pharisee—typified by Paul—gave place to the Christian humility which could confess itself to be “less than the least of all the saints.” But such miracles were not confined to individuals; a common contact with Jesus Christ issued in the emergence of a new society which was known as the Church. That is to say,

where the spirit of Jesus governed the relationships of men, diverse and even antagonistic personalities were welded into a fellowship. Such temperamental opposites as Peter and John sat down at the same table; Matthew, in the service of the Roman State and Simon the Zealot, fierce patriot and anti-Roman, were fellow-disciples of the same Master; and so it came to be that while world empires fell, yet contact with the life of Christ enabled the Church to survive as an instance, however imperfect, of what a Christian social order ought to be.

All this was accomplished and the humanly impossible was made possible through contact with Jesus Christ. Something was communicated by His personality which turned weakness into strength. But the possibility of such miracles did not pass with the passing of Jesus. We too can start where the first disciples began—with a consideration of Christ's person, a study of the Gospel portrait; and to do so is to meet an intellectual challenge and to begin to formulate "belief about Christ." Then—as a fact of spiritual biography some such process follows as this—as we face the historic fact of Christ there presses upon us a sense of obligation; we feel that we ought to "live like Christ"; we try to do so and we fail; and then from this endeavour and this failure there comes the greatest discovery of all, for Christ becomes to us the standard of our idea of God. That is to say, we cannot think of God except in terms of His character; the conviction

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smites home that God *is* what Jesus *was*. The Love on the Cross therefore was not merely a historic fact but a spiritual fact, and the living presence which we find in nature and in the human heart has a definite character which is the character of Jesus Christ. Consequently to turn to God through Christ in worship and in prayer, to give our soul's response to the moral beauty and grandeur of Christ's life, is perforce to establish contact with the living power of God Himself.

It is this Divine Power which is the characteristic gift of Christianity. If we need proof of this, we can turn to the Christian experience of the centuries or of to-day. The missionary effort of the Church is our most dramatic witness in these days as it was in the day when Paul bore witness that his Gospel came to the Thessalonians “not in word only but also in power”; for by this power souls are still transformed, the bonds of sin in human life are broken; fear, anxiety, suffering are burdens endurable; whilst prosperity and earthly happiness are sanctified. But this Divine Power within the soul reaches beyond the individual and makes for the redemption of society; for it is the impulse behind all enduring human fellowship. That is to say, only when men are at one with God are they truly at one each with the other; and so in this Christian contact with the Unseen is the means, and the only means, whereby the problems of the social order can finally be solved and earth endowed with the likeness of Heaven.

We may explain this Christian experience as we will; that indeed is the province of Theology; but the experience remains as a testimony to the fact that Christianity is not merely "belief about Christ," or even "living like Christ"; it is first of all contact with God through Christ and then both life and belief in the light and the power of that experience.

It is this personal relationship to Jesus Christ which is the essential fact in Christianity. All other religions are separable from their founders; they are "Book Religions," or they turn upon the observance of a prescribed ritual or the performance of certain duties. But divorce Christianity from the person of *its* founder and at once you destroy its genius; for Christianity is not only a message of Divine Truth, it is a gospel of Divine Power, and that Power is mediated to men through the Person of Jesus Christ.

REV. H. T. CHILVERS.

REV. H. TYDEMAN CHILVERS.

AFTER spending his early years in London commercial life, he was ordained as Minister of the Baptist Chapel, Keppel Street, Bloomsbury, in 1894. Nine years later he removed to Bethesda Baptist Chapel, Ipswich, from which he was called in 1919 to the Metropolitan Tabernacle, the pulpit made famous by the Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon.

FAITH'S MANIFESTO

REV. H. TYDEMAN CHILVERS

*“ For this God is our God for ever and ever :
He will be our Guide even unto death.”*

Psalm xlviii, 14.

“ HAVING no hope, and without God in the world,” is the solemn description given by the Holy Spirit, through the apostolic writings, of an unregenerated soul. The outstanding characteristic of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ in its experimental aspect is that of living faith. Faith is marked by distinctive acts. It always returns to the source whence it came ; faith from God goes to God. It is a subjective grace, for it dwells within the spirit of a man ; but its objective is the eternal God Who is the refuge and strength of every possessor of that faith. So the Psalmist here declares that the God of Whom he has been speaking, who is the only true God, is *his* God, and that for ever and ever, and will also be his Guide even unto death. Now in looking into this message this morning we shall notice the text, in the first place, as being faith’s manifesto. Faith makes her declaration, taking her stand, making a great affirmation. “ This God is our God for ever and ever : He will be our Guide even unto death.”

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I

Faith's Manifesto. Now in this manifesto you have an avowal of faith's choice of God and her allegiance to Him. This grace of faith distinguishes the will of God from all other volitional acts. It says, "Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us, but of Thee and Thee only will we make mention." Faith makes her choice on the ground of revelation. God is revealed ; He is known only by revelation : "Can any by searching find out God ?" No, God is not found by merely searching ; God is a self-revealer and He has revealed Himself. The Bible is the revelation of God, and faith accepts the God of revelation. She takes her stand upon the word of the living God, and accepts what that word says about God Himself. Taking her stand on the vantage-ground of infallible truth, she makes choice of the God of heaven and earth as He is declared therein. What a choice it is ! The attributes and perfections that make up the Eternal Godhead are almost beyond our comprehension. Yet faith sufficiently apprehends to act decisively thereupon and thus derives comfort and consolation and strength. What shall we say of the eternity, of the omnipresence, the omniscience, the abounding faithfulness of Jehovah ? These attributes and perfections become the sheet anchor of living faith. Faith makes choice of Him as the abiding One, as the One Who remains when everything else passes away. Faith finds its bedrock in the very Being

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of God and to her He becomes increasingly real and even nearer than hands or feet and she oft-times sings :

“ When I can say that God is mine,
When I can feel His glory shine,
I tread the world beneath my feet—
And all that earth calls good or great.”

Shallow happiness and little joy is the outcome of a very meagre conception of God. The God of revelation, the God of the Bible, is the Almighty Being. The One Who makes the heavens His throne, and the earth His footstool. Surrounded by the squadrons of angelic spirits, the uplift of His finger, and the nod of His head is the Divine behest for any one of them. With heaven and earth at His command, He marshals the stars, and gives them all their names. He takes the events and circumstances of life, and rules and governs and controls, and none can stay His hand. And faith unhesitatingly makes choice of Him, and says, “ This God is our God for ever and ever.”

But then the God of revelation is the God Who is declared in Christ, the Mediator. There is a beautiful story told of a Christian sister who went into a new district, and one of the first cases she visited was a poor dying fallen woman in an alley of the city. Being somewhat nervous in her new sphere, and also fearful of the circumstances in which she found herself, she began to talk to this poor woman of the greatness of God. And the woman opened her dying eyes and said, “ I don’t know Him. I don’t

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want to know Him." The sister felt confused at first, and she silently offered a prayer to God that, by His Spirit, she might be helped ; and she began to talk to the woman about the Saviour. And she looked at the sister and said, " But is Jesus God ? " " Oh, yes," replied the sister, " Jesus Christ is God." " Oh, I can trust Him," said the woman. That poor woman realised God as her Saviour in Christ Jesus, and ere she passed away, sinful woman though she was, she found salvation through Jesus Christ. My dear men and women, the God of the Bible of whom faith makes choice is the God that is revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the image of the invisible God, the effulgence of His glory, Who is the express image of His Person. " For the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Beneath the shadow of the Cross, and looking through the mediatorial achievements of Jesus Christ, faith lifts up her heart unto the living God, and says, " Through Jesus Christ this God is my God for ever and ever." God in Christ reveals His heart. God in Christ shows me the unfathomable depths of His love. God in Christ is a God of grace, but equally that of righteousness and truth. At Calvary I see all the attributes of God manifested and magnified and in perfect harmony in the glorious accomplishment of the dear Redeemer.

Yes, but the Holy Spirit, too, is the witness of God ; and the Holy Spirit, co-equal with the Father and with the Son, bears witness not only

to the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, but to the Personality of God. Faith makes choice and accepts that invisible wonderful Third Person in the Trinity, Who is not far from any one of us. Faith receives Him ; and by the witness, the indwelling witness, the silent touch, the mystic touch of the Spirit of God upon my spirit, faith says, " This God is my God for ever and ever : He will be my Guide even unto death."

This unequivocal choice and avowal of living faith links us up with all those who have made God their personal possession. What a delightful expression is that, " My father's God." Perhaps some young person here can say, " My mother's God," and faith is helped to make its choice by the demonstrated relationship of the souls of men and women around us to their living Lord. My mother never preached to me in words, but her life spoke volumes. She witnessed for God ; and when by the witness of the Holy Spirit in my own heart I could and did make choice of the Saviour I felt it to be a great joy that I was in living fellowship with the God of my mother. And this is what it does always. We think of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob. We think of the God of men and women who have been used through the centuries. And as we look over the range of past generations, and see the " Sacramental host of God's elect " as they have marched on year after year, we say, " This God is our God for ever and for ever."

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II

Then you have in this manifesto not only the *choice* of faith, but you *have a very definite appropriation of God*. Faith identifies itself with God, takes its stand in with Him and by Him, walks and talks and lives in fellowship with God. It is not simply pointing to Him and saying "yes, that is God," but faith having distinguished Him from all others, says "He is *my* God." And the man possessing this faith links himself and identifies himself with God in all His redeeming purposes, in all the great principles enunciated in His word, in all that pertains to His being, and His work and His outgoings in the world, whether in nature or in grace. You cannot claim God as yours, and stand isolated from Him. It demands a living identification with God. If you appropriate God, then you must be godly, and godliness must be the characteristic of your life. And if people will not read the Bible, they must see the Bible translated in your life. And if they will not believe the testimony that is written, they must be helped to make choice of God by the witness of God through the lives of His people. And so the Psalmist says, "He is our God." And when faith appropriates Him like this, she is in line with the procedure of Divine grace. God, by an eternal covenant, has bequeathed Himself to us. "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." In that covenant that is ordered in all things and sure, God has given Himself to us, the free gift of

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sovereign grace, and faith definitely accepts Him.

There came a time in my life which I had not planned or scheduled, and I do not know that anyone planned it for me, except that others prayed that it might come about, and when that something came, so wonderful, as to change the whole of my outlook on life, I went to God, and I said,

“ Nothing but sin I Thee can give,
Nothing but grace shall I receive.”

“ Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee.” When faith is thus awakened none but God can satisfy. It is not enough to know that others have claimed Him ; I must have Him for myself as though there were none other to have any share in Him. I must have the whole of what He is, and what He has revealed. It must be God and my soul. The writer here says, “ He shall be mine.” Whatever others do with Him ; whatever others say about Him. They may go their way, but I am going mine. My way is God’s way, and God is my portion in the land of the living for ever.

And, of course, when you make choice of God, and when you appropriate Him, you take your stand by Calvary, you nail your colours to the mast of Calvary, and you stand on redemption ground. You rest beneath the shelter and the shadow of the victory of the Cross. And not only so, when you take God by faith you take the victory of Calvary

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and find it workable in your life. When you are in living identification with God you may stand in with all the achievements of our Lord Jesus Christ ; for He was victorious over sin, and death, and hell, and the grave. The Church of Christ needs this note to-day. She has worn her mourning habiliment long enough. She has indulged in croaking and crying quite long enough. Oh, for the time to come when every believer in Christ Jesus will take his and her stand beside the victorious Lord and never dream of defeat. God, Who never halts, Who marches on in onward progress, unto eternal victory, but always by way of the Cross and the substitutionary sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by way of the empty tomb, and the enthroned Redeemer ; this is the God we adore, and we must take our stand with the Psalmist and say with him, He is my God.

Do you notice in this manifesto that *faith declares also a surrender to Divine guidance?* “ He shall be my Guide even unto death.” “ I do not ask to see the distant scene, one step is enough for me.” God has declared that He will guide me, so I fling off the reins now, and trust Him for guidance and for direction. There is a story told of a renowned preacher that he was on his way to fulfil an engagement in the country. Someone met him at the station, and he took his seat in the trap provided for him ; and a friend was driving. The horse seemed rather frisky, and when they came to difficult parts of the road the great preacher put

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his hand out to steady the driver's arm. And presently the driver said, "Who is going to drive, you or me?" The great preacher felt rather ashamed, and sat quiet for the rest of the journey. But as he said afterwards, it taught him a lesson, that if God was to guide the life He must do it all, or not at all. And as faith makes choice of God, and appropriates Him, it says, "Thou shalt be my guide even unto death, I yield myself to Thee." That means acceptance of the will of God. And believe me when I say there is nothing else in this world that counts but the will of God. Anything that you do or I do, if it is not within the compass of the will of God, it does not count with God. The only thing that is worth doing in the world is the will of God. And the writer says here, "Thou shalt be my guide even unto death."

This also means and involves *prayerful watchfulness*. We say to one another, "you want to make up your mind about this." Yes, but the mind must be stayed upon God. You are going to make a choice of a business, or you are retiring from active life, so are thinking about a nice little green spot down in the country. The first thing for us to consider is what the will of God is about the matter. If God is going to guide you there must be watchful prayerfulness for His leading and direction; and your mind must be in harmony with His, and His will is revealed in the Bible; and the Bible should become the man of our counsel, the director of our ways, the inspiration of our thoughts. Have you

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sought for the guidance of God about next Wednesday ?* That is a primary question for every man and woman who fears God. What does God want me to do ? What is God's will for this country ? What is God's mandate for this favoured isle of ours ? May He guide and direct. Oh, yes, it finds its outworking all the way along. You see, if I am going to submit to the guidance of the Lord, then I must know what submission to the silent tuition of the Holy Spirit means ; that inward witness of the Spirit of God when I am in the secret place talking to Him ; it means also the resignation of my life right unto death. You need not worry as to when you are going to die, or even how you are going to die. We may not die at all if the Lord comes back soon. But if He delays His coming we shall die, but until death it must be God and I, never alone, no, never alone, just following where He leads, and in death there will be no parting, but it may be said, " And they two went on together," and " I would rather walk in the dark with God than go alone in the light."

III

I must hasten to notice now, in conclusion, that such a manifesto as this *demands demonstration in life*. If God is my God, and if He is going to be my Guide even unto death, then there must be con-

* The day of political election.

sistency of life and walk and especially in spiritual matters. I must walk with God in the deeper movements of my soul. I must know what it is to have God brought into all the deep conflict of thought and mind in relation to spiritual things. There must be a daily vital practical fellowship with God. I must stake my all upon God if He is my God. But such a manifesto as this must also *be a directing factor in all the ordinary transactions of life.* In the home—and the home is a very sacred place, and there are many transactions there that can only be determined really by such a manifesto as this. Whatever comes within that sacred circle of the home must be decided by the will of God so far as we know and understand it. God must be consulted on the hearth about everything. The family altar must not be neglected. This Bible must not be put on a shelf to be looked at and dusted in the ordinary routine. God must be consulted about myself, my wife, my children, my circumstances. Oh, do not be hypocrites and quote a text like this, and put out your manifesto, “This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death,” and then crowd Him out of the home circle. *He must be there.* In St. Paul’s Churchyard some years ago, in one of the big business houses and at the back of that big business house, where between three and four hundred people were employed, there was an office, and at a certain hour in the morning there was a sign put up on the door of that office, and no one entered that room then

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because they knew that the three partners in that office were engaged in prayer to God. The Bible was in that office. The fear of God was there. In that business house in St. Paul's Churchyard a manifesto like this was proved to be of working value. And, my hearers, if it is not of working value then, for God's sake and your own give it up. And if it will not work in the board-room, in the office, in the committees, in the shrine of commercial enterprise, then it is useless to us. This God is our God for business and for the home, and in all national affairs also. The Lord is absolutely trustworthy.

What more can I say? Such a manifesto as this should keep us calm amidst life's troubles and cares. But what have I to fear? "With Christ in the vessel I smile at the storm." The thought that God will see us through should keep us calm. I am a poor sailor, and one day when I was especially ill, I looked up and saw the captain pacing backwards and forwards on the bridge of the steamer with all the composure imaginable. I thought to myself, yes, God is on the bridge all the time. God has the reins of the Government. He has "His way in the whirlwind and in the storm." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." "This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." Is this God your God, my hearer? May the Holy Spirit help you now to make choice of Him and appropriate Him as your own Saviour and Lord.

REV. G. H. MORRISON, D.D.

*REV. GEORGE HERBERT MORRISON,
D.D.*

He was born in Glasgow, where his father was Principal of the Stow Training College. After his ministry in Thurso and Dundee he was called to Wellington Church, Glasgow. Among his publications are: "The Afterglow of God," "Flood-Tide," "The Footsteps of the Flock," "The Significance of the Cross," "Sun-Rise," "The Unlighted Lustre," "The Wings of the Morning." He has edited Thomas Boston's "Diary," and Hugh Macdonald's "Rambles round Glasgow," and is a constant contributor to the religious press.

JUDGING FOR ONESELF, A CHRISTIAN DUTY

REV. GEORGE HERBERT MORRISON, D.D.

"Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"
Luke xii, 57.

I WONDER what is the import of these words, and what our Saviour actually meant by them. I wonder, when He uttered them that day, what thought was moving in His mind. One difference between our Lord and us is this, that everything He said *had* a meaning. He never spoke just for the sake of speaking. And to read His words, however difficult, in the quiet assurance that they *mean* intensely, is one of the first requirements of discipleship. Often the spiritual meaning of His words is the one thing that seems to escape the commentator. You may dissect the rose, and prepare it for the microscope, but the beauty of it is gone when you do that. And the words of the Saviour are like roses, living, and because living beautiful, with an immediate appeal to heart and life. What, then, did the Master mean when he said, "Why do ye not judge things for yourselves?" And remember He is speaking to you and me as truly as to His audience in Galilee.

Now the way to approach the words is this. It

is to take the verses immediately preceding. Our verse is not an isolated utterance ; it springs from what immediately precedes. *There* our Lord is talking of the weather—what an extraordinary range of things He talked about. He is talking of how rustic people can tell you what the weather is going to be. And the point and pith is that *this* is a knowledge of their mother-wit, gathered in, and garnered, from experience. They did not go to school to get that learning. They certainly did not gather it from books. It was not by sitting at any teacher's feet that they laboriously acquired that weather-lore. They used their eyes. They looked. They summarised and crystallised experience—until they knew that to-morrow morning would be rainy and to-morrow evening sultry with the heat. This means that so far as weather was concerned they judged of their own selves. They based their judgment on their own experience ; on what they had seen happening every day. Of the science of the weather they knew nothing. Of meteorology they were ignorant. Experience gave them the data that they needed.

And then our Lord says, " Children, I am going to talk to you of something more important than the weather "—for after all, in Galilee and Glasgow, there *are* things more important than the weather—" and I want you to feel that in these higher things it is exactly as it is with weather-lore. I want you to judge of your own selves. Here am I, a Teacher sent from God, but some of you are

dubious of My teaching; some of you question the words that I have spoken, and are doubtful of My predictions of the future; then use your eyes—watch—look around you—judge things from your own experience, and you will find My every utterance corroborated.” The Lord is so certain that everything He says is in deepest harmony with life, with its hopes and its illimitable yearnings, that He is willing to stake Himself, and all His doctrine, on the verdict of the open eye that goes through life judging for itself. Reject Him if you will. You cannot reject life. *Some* scale of values you must have. You are at liberty to choose your own. And the Lord is so perfectly and so sublimely certain that experience will justify His claims, that He is willing to stake everything on that. “Judge even of yourselves that which is right. Leave Me out of account if you desire to. Open your eyes. Value your own life. Watch others. Study the big world.” There is nothing more wonderful in Jesus than the perfect confidence with which He knows that independent judgment such as that, leads to His blessed feet.

I

Suppose now we analyse that thought a little, setting it in different lights. Think, for instance, of the selfish life. In the teaching of our blessed Lord selfishness is unsparingly condemned. He that liveth to himself is dead. He that saveth

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his life shall lose it. In varying phrase, by metaphor and parable, with an urgency that never lessens, our Lord warns His hearers against selfishness. Not only were His words a warning. His life was a stronger warning than His words—that life so rich in sacrifice, so full of the self-forgetfulness of love, so continually absorbed in others' needs and in the lowly service of the poor, that self passed in music out of sight. Accept Christ and that is plain. It is written so that he who runs may read. Christ stands for self-forgetful service. Christ and the selfish life are opposites. And down the ages, with whatever failure, that has been recognised by all His followers, and has directed the endeavours of their days.

But now suppose you have a man who refuses to accept that judgment, who disowns and disregards it, who resists the challenge of such words—what then, is that an end of things? It is then the Lord comes and says, "Friend, why do you not judge of your own self? You doubt my words? So be it. Nobody forces you to credit them. If ye will not come to me that ye might have life, no sovereign power is going to make you come. One thing only," says the Lord, "I beg of you, before you cast my claims into oblivion—that you would judge things of your own selves. Never mind My words for the moment. Use your own experience of life. Look at the men and women whom you know. Judge by what you have actually seen. And tell me, apart altogether from anything I

have ever said, what kind of people are the selfish people? Are they happy? Are they blessed? Are they loved? Is life a big radiant thing for them? Do they look as if they knew the secret? Will anybody miss them when they die? Are not they always poor though they be wealthy, narrow though their dwelling be a palace, restless though they have the world to roam in?" If only we would judge of our own selves—if only we would take the facts of life—if only with undistorted vision we would accept the verdict of experience, we should find that every word the Master utters is rooted in the reality of things, and corroborated in the experience of men. "You hypocrites," He says, "you can discern the heavens—you can tell when it is going to rain! Cannot you tell, by the same observation, when life is going to be a tragedy? Judge of your own selves. Take life as you see it and decide. And the decision will bring you to My feet." I know nothing more like our blessed Lord than that perfect confidence in His own values. He does not want you to shut your eyes. He wants you to judge of your own self. He leaves it there, supremely tranquil. Every fact of life is in His favour. Facts are the highway to His feet.

II

Again, think of some prevailing habit; for instance, think of gambling. You hear men discussing

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and disputing whether or not gambling be a sin. It is very notable how in all these moral questions Jesus is in the midst—in the midst, right on to this hour, the insistent and inevitable Christ. And so men argue and discuss, always with Jesus in the midst, whether or not gambling be a sin. That is to say they want *Him* to judge, as the man did with the inheritance. They want to hear Him say “Yes, it is a sin,” or “No, it is not a sin.” My dear hearer, what the Master does, in a hundred cases such as that, is to cast the burden of judging upon *you*. “Judge,” He says, “of your own selves. Do not hide facts by asking me to arbitrate. Use your eyes. Read your daily newspaper. Find out what is happening in Glasgow.” So certain is He that if a man does that, instead of debating about abstract sinfulness, he will be led to the mind and will of heaven. Use your eyes as the humble rustics do when they look abroad to see if rain is coming. *They* do not need anyone to force conclusions on them. No more do you with gambling. Use your eyes, see what is going on, cease discussions about sinfulness, and wisdom will lift her voice up in the gates. See the misery that gambling causes ; see the kind of temper it creates ; see how it saps the moral fibre ; see how it takes the edge off honest toil—*that* is what Jesus means, in regard to this, and to a hundred questions, when He says, “O that men would judge of their own selves.” The looseness of the moral law to-day, the laxness in the most sacred ties, the disregard of

Sabbath rest, the passionate questing to be rich—"Master, how dost Thou judge all that?" and then the Master turns to us and says "Why do ye not judge of your own selves?" Is it succeeding? Are men happier? Is life a bigger thing and the world better? Use your eyes just as the rustics do when they warn you that the rain is coming. And the Lord is so supremely confident that the verdict of fact is on His side, that He just leaves it there—the rest is silence.

III

Again, take the state of the world to-day, and think of some of the words of Jesus. Are not they perfectly familiar to us all? "Seek ye first the kingdom and its righteousness and all else shall be added unto you." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "Love your enemies." "Turn the other cheek." And men say "Quite so; very beautiful dreaming; the idealism of the rainbow; but in a world like this it would never work at all." Well, if men know what would not work, the presumption is they know what *would* work, and knowing it have tried it, and the result of the trial is our world. And it is then the Lord comes, discountenanced, flaunted as a dreamer, and says, "Children, won't you judge things for yourselves?" What of your slums—what of your strikes—what of your glaring and hideous

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inequalities, where beggary and luxury rub shoulders, and all under the sound of the church bells ; what of your multitudes ripe for revolution, your countries desolate and drenched with blood, and nobody one whit the better of it all ? Use your eyes. Trust experience. Judge of your own selves. *Has* the wisdom of the world succeeded ? Has it given the crowd a glimpse of paradise ? The moment that the facts are faced, and that is the only thing the Lord demands here, the world is ready for His coming. His hopes are the only hopes for men. His programme the most practical of politics. His spirit the only spirit that can make the world beautiful for everybody. If men would only judge of their own selves, there would go a cry from the river to the sea, " Lord save us, or we perish."

THE LORD BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM,
THE RT. REV. E. W. BARNES, Sc.D., F.R.S.

THE LORD BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM
(*The Rt. Rev. Ernest William Barnes, Sc.D.,*
F.R.S.).

DR. BARNES was educated at King Edward's School, Birmingham, and entered Trinity College, Cambridge, as a scholar. He was bracketed 2nd Wrangler; and in 1897 he became President of the Union, and a Fellow of Trinity College in 1898. He was ordained in 1902, and later became Examining Chaplain to Bishop of Llandaff, Master of the Temple, Fellow of King's College, London, and was Select Preacher at both Oxford and Cambridge. In 1918 he was made Canon of Westminster, and in 1924 was appointed Bishop of Birmingham. He is the author of various Memoirs and Papers on Gamma Functions, Integral Functions, and Linear Difference Equations, in the *Transactions* of the Royal Society, the Cambridge Philosophical Society, the London Mathematical Society and elsewhere; he has also given many contributions to Theology.

“FOLLOW ME YOURSELF”

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Peter said to Jesus : “ Master, what about this man ? ” “ If it be my will that he should wait till I come,” answered Jesus, “ what has that to do with you ? Follow me yourself.” John xxi, 21, 22.

It is now generally agreed that the last chapter of St. John's Gospel, from which these verses come, is not a part of the original book but, as it were, an appendix to it. The Gospel proper ends with the 20th chapter. Its natural conclusion is the sentence : “ These things have been recorded that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God—and that, through belief in His Name, you may have life.” Such words give briefly and clearly the main purpose of the Evangelist. He sought to proclaim that life in all possible richness on earth, leading to life eternal in the Kingdom of Heaven, is God's gift to men through Jesus Christ. The Gospel, as we know, was written many years after the death of Jesus, at a time, indeed, when the oldest of those who had known the Master in the flesh were passing away. Many Christians were troubled by the situation ; their dearest hope was fading. There had been a persistent belief among the Lord's followers that He would return in the

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lifetime of some of those who had seen Him on earth. In particular it was thought that Jesus had promised the beloved disciple that he, at any rate, should tarry till the Lord's coming. The belief proved vain. Dismay was widespread. But among the group of Christian saints and seers who lived at Ephesus there was true insight. One of them, probably blending allegory with tradition, found a message for his age and was led to add to the fourth Gospel a story of the appearance of Jesus in Galilee to some of His disciples. They were fishing, these disciples who were soon to be fishers of men. When they threw in the net, as Jesus commanded, they obtained a great haul of a hundred and fifty-three fishes. Why this detail? we ask. Because, so some scholars assert, a hundred and fifty-three was the number of kinds of fishes which were then believed to exist. The miracle hides an allegory ; it reiterates the promise that by obedience to Christ His followers shall in the end draw all men unto Him. We are told, moreover, that the net which held the fishes had not been torn. Here, too, is an allegory ; the Church that is to be, when men are true to their Lord, shall not be rent by faction. It shall be one body with many members, whose Head is the Lord Christ. This kind of symbolism puzzles some among us because it is unfamiliar to our thought. Let us pass to the more simple sequel.

After breakfast, the fellowship meal, Jesus gave the thrice-repeated command to Peter, “Feed my

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lambs." Here it is clearly implied that Peter and those with him could not go back to their former occupations; neither were they to wait idly till their Master's return. They were to shepherd the little flock of Christ. There follows a saying of Jesus which is not easy to understand, though it clearly includes a sombre prediction of the death by which Peter should glorify Christ. Yet it too is primarily symbolic. In youth men can choose their calling. At the end age comes on. The old man must lift up his hands that another may fasten the girdle round his cloak. Tottering and half blind, he must go where he is carried. "But," says the Master, "even at life's end follow me."

Then we are told that Peter turned round and saw the beloved disciple following them as they walked. And he asked the Lord: "What about this man?" "If I will that he wait till I come," said Jesus, "what is that to you? Follow me yourself." The writer insists that it is a fact that Jesus did not promise that the beloved disciple should not die before the Lord's return. The Lord said: "If that be My will, how can it affect your own duty? You must follow me."

I

As we thus read the last chapter of St. John's Gospel by the light of modern scholarship, it acquires a new meaning for us. We have in it a

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message of hope for ourselves because it was a command to disciples of Christ, who some 1,850 years ago were disappointed, disillusioned. Christ had not returned to establish His Kingdom on earth. “No,” the writer of this appendix would have us believe, “He made no promise of a speedy return. Moreover, what has the time of His return to do with you? Your duty is to follow Him. By service to Him the whole world of men shall yet be redeemed. Follow the Master.”

Like those who in the distant past sought eternal life in Christ, we in this age are disappointed, disillusioned. The nineteenth century, with its brilliant intellectual discoveries, its very definite social progress, its hopeful enthusiasm, has gone. One of the greatest eras in the history of mankind has come to a ruinous end. Some among us in their bitterness belittle this recent time of peace and prosperity which has suddenly become remote. It had in it seeds of disaster, as we now see only too clearly; but Christian enterprise was vigorous and Christian idealism active. Now we are tired, depressed. So much that was good has been destroyed that it seems hardly worth while to begin to build anew. The hope of rapid progress towards the Kingdom of God has proved as vain as was the hope of Christ's reappearance on earth within a century of His Crucifixion. In their discouragement many who were once enthusiasts wonder whether it is of any use to follow the way of Christ. Others make no effort. Some even

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scoff at the Christian ideal. To us Christ's answer comes : " What have they to do with you ? Follow Me yourself."

This is Christ's message to each of us : " Follow Me yourself." Though the times are evil, though we are passing through a period of turmoil, of reaction, of spiritual exhaustion, our course is plain ; we, at all events, must follow Christ.

Think of the Christians when the appendix to St. John's Gospel was written. They were small scattered communities living in a hostile world. They were despised, distrusted, maligned, at intervals persecuted. Government officials thought them disloyal because they would not worship the deified head of the State. Religious pagans denounced them because the worship of Christ was exclusive and uncompromising. The educated despised them as superstitious fanatics. They bore the burden of the world's hostility—and, above all, Christ had not returned. Yet victory came to those who had strength individually to follow Christ. Some, possibly many, gave way under the strain ; but the rest in meekness, patience and temperance held fast, serving one another, loving one another. Gradually they won regard by the purity of their lives, by their steadfastness, their sobriety, their excellence as citizens. Their influence extended. Their power grew. They conquered the Empire. But nothing fails like success. In a nominally Christian world the sharp outlines of fellowship in Christ become blurred. It is easy to pretend to

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follow the Master. Men readily persuade themselves that they are His disciples when they can in safety give Him lip service while neither their motives nor their acts are true to Him. How often has religion been blighted by its apparent prosperity? Men must be sick at heart because the Saviour is flouted or ignored—they must discover anew that they have to take up a Cross when they follow Him—before a new outpouring of His Spirit can cleanse as with living water.

II

Repeatedly has this been seen in history. Let me remind you of but one instance taken from our own national past. The Great Rebellion was the endeavour of all that was vital in Puritanism and of much that was best in the national character to reconstruct English political, religious and social life. Its outcome was disastrous. It bred Fifth Monarchy men who wished by force to establish a reign of the saints. It bred Levellers whose passion for equality made vain the hope of freedom. All kinds of fantastic hopes and beliefs arose in the confusion. The result was Cromwell's firm but militarist régime and finally the Restoration, a period of reaction, revenge, ostentatious vice. What did the best men of the time do? We know little of the private lives of the ordinary men and women who sought to follow Christ. Such people make history

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by the creative power of their faith but are seldom recorded in it. Yet two men of the time are familiar to us all. John Milton, impoverished and blind, wrote "Paradise Lost," that great drama of the struggle of the individual soul. And John Bunyan wrote "Pilgrim's Progress," the story of the man who tried to follow Christ. Each turned from the world where his hopes seemed ruined; each, as it were, went back to the beginning as he emphasised personal responsibility and the need of personal goodness. The solemn cadence of Milton's verse fitly enshrines the solemn theme of man in the presence of his Maker. In the greatest allegory the world has seen, Bunyan showed how a single soul could triumph over temptation and reach the heavenly city.

"He who would valiant be
'Gainst all disaster,
Let him in constancy
Follow the Master."

It has been said that Bunyan is to be condemned for making Christian leave wife and children in the City of Destruction while he sets out alone. But the prophet of Bedford jail was wiser than his critics. There must be a period of loneliness when we begin to search for God. In finding Him we find the need of true fellowship, which is something richer and deeper than association for business or pleasure. And, be it remembered, Christian's wife and children followed him in the end. In a time of

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spiritual disaster the pioneers who hear and obey the command "Follow Me yourself" are they through whose influence others are led to journey to the Holy City.

III

To-day we have to realise that we, like Milton and Bunyan, are living in an age of reaction. War is demoralising. In it truth is perverted, men become callous and suspicious, force is exalted above reason. Sympathy becomes narrow. Revenge begins to seem natural. The odious principle that the end justifies the means gains strength. The war, thank God, is over; but the passions which it excited still remain. They will be with us until those who follow Christ can persuade their fellows to love His ideals. Reformation will be slow. To re-establish the sway of Christian standards, after such a period of moral and spiritual turmoil as that through which we have passed, cannot possibly be easy. And yet evil condemns itself. The laws of the Kingdom of God reassert their supremacy because they are necessary to the civilised progress of mankind. They who show the temper of Christ prove wiser than their fellows just because they are more true to the spiritual purpose for which man was created. For twenty years before the war there was active hostility to Christian Faith and to Christian ideals of conduct. It was said by a brilliant English writer that "the men in

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whom the religious instinct is strongest move further and further from the Christian postulates." Nietzsche affirmed that "Christianity is the one great curse, the one great spiritual corruption." A philosopher of repute in our midst declared that "we none of us are Christians and we all know, no matter what we say, that we ought not to be." Well, we have had a few years of widespread repudiation of Christianity—and the experience has been sufficient entirely to discredit such assertions. Thoughtful men are rediscovering the value of the teaching of Christ. To us who worship Him that discovery is no new thing; but it remains for us to gain and show the power of His Spirit. Christianity has not more than held its own among the religions of the world simply because of its ethics. Other religions which have fallen before it had moral codes of real value. But our own Faith will prove itself invincible because Christ gives power to those who simply follow Him. The man who feels himself joined to Christ—he who after searching has found the Lord—has a strength not his own. The greatest of Christian missionaries, an unprepossessing Jew, subject to periodic attacks of distressing illness, said confidently: "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me." He had achieved an absolute surrender to his Lord; and from his absolute faith came his invincible optimism. Did not John Wesley show the same heroic endurance, a like resolute confidence, because he also lived with Christ? When Wesley began to preach large areas of

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England were practically heathen. But he saw that the Gospel was sufficient for human needs ; he gained, by self-discipline and self-surrender, the power which Christ gives to those who follow Him ; and he began the regeneration of England. At the beginning the odds seemed overwhelmingly against him, but he demonstrated afresh the truth of the message which came to Zechariah : " Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

To-day men seek their own. The temper of strife persists. The fear of that poverty which always follows war has produced bitterness, jealousy, disunion. It is for us who call ourselves by Christ's Name to show a different temper, to be patient under hardship, generous to the utmost of our power, calm amid dissension and, so far as in us lies, at peace with all men.

And, as we try thus to be loyal to Christ, we read in a newspaper of someone who seems to be obviously seeking selfish ends which will harm our own well-being. " What about that man ? " we ask one another indignantly. Christ's answer comes, " What has he to do with you ? Follow Me yourself."

Help us, O Father, that we may serve Thee in confidence and truth by following Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

REV. JAMES REID, M.A.

REV. JAMES REID, M.A.

THE REV. JAMES REID was educated at Edinburgh University and New College, Edinburgh. In 1905 he became Minister at Oban, passing on in 1910 to Sherwood United Free Church, Paisley. Here he remained until called to his present Church, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Eastbourne. He was Warrack Lecturer in Preaching, 1923-4. He has published two volumes entitled "Materials of Moral Instruction," and "The Victory of God." His lectures on Preaching are published under the title "In Quest of Reality."

THE CONDITIONS OF COMMUNION

REV. JAMES REID, M.A.

*“ And God said Certainly I will be with thee ;
and this shall be a token unto thee that I have
sent thee : when thou hast brought forth the
people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this
mountain.” Exodus iii, 12.*

THIS is one of the great stories of history. It tells how the call to his life's task came to one of the world's mightiest men, as Moses is acknowledged by all competent students to have been. His career up to this point had been that of many great emancipators. In his hot youth he had been stirred to champion the cause of the people who were oppressed, but the time was not then ripe. His rashness, in point of fact, had made the task impossible for the moment, and he himself had fled into exile, to wait for God's signal. The desert could not have been an altogether uncongenial experience for Moses. He was a mystic and a dreamer. These quiet spaces where he communed with God must have grown sweetly pleasant to his spirit. “ Far from the madding crowd,” he was finding the secret of the Presence. He could not indeed have been altogether at peace. Tidings must have come to him from time to time of the

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sufferings of his race. Often in these solitudes his spirit would be disturbed by thoughts of their misery, flashed before him by his active imagination, while he brooded and chafed at his helplessness. Then came the call. But when it came it was like the rude awakening from a dream. It is one thing to see visions ; it is another thing to face practical difficulties. Moses began to think of the people, of their obstinacy, their apathy, their unwillingness to help themselves. There are none who find it so hard to accept a gospel of deliverance as those who need it most, whose condition has sunk them so low that it has put out the spark of hope. Moses thought, too, of himself, of his own poor gifts and stammering tongue. The very idea of his confronting the mighty Pharaoh in his palace was almost paralysing. At this point there came to him, we are told, the assurance which he knew to be of God. "Certainly I will be with thee ; and this shall be a token unto thee : when thou hast brought the people up out of Egypt ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

There are several very profound suggestions in this strange promise. For one thing it was an answer to Moses' own uncertainty as he faced this adventure. One question kept whispering itself to him as he looked ahead—the question whether he could be sure this was a call of God at all. It all sounds very real and unmistakable to our minds as we read the story—the voice, the dazzling miracle of a bush that burned and was not con-

sumed. There could hardly be any doubt after that. But we must remember the metaphorical language of Scripture, its graphic symbols. When the Bible says God spoke, we are not, of course, to infer an actual voice, but an interpretation, through spiritual insight, of some event or situation such as any of us may face or be facing at this moment. We are as near God to-day as men were then, and He speaks to us in the circumstances of our life as really as He spoke to Moses. It is the interpreting mind and conscience that hears the divine whisper in the familiar, and sees the "common bush aflame with God."

"The angels keep their ancient places,
Turn but a stone and start a wing!"

Else were our world to-day, even with all its marvels, a poorer place. So when God speaks with Moses there is, so to speak, room for doubt; he is tempted, as every man is, to question the reality of his spiritual experience. Is this word of conscience really a voice of God? So we ask when the first flush of conviction begins to fade into the light of common day. Is this way that seemed so right yesterday really so right as it seemed? Or was it, perchance, only a morbid fancy or a sentimental mood? Have we simply been dreaming, when the challenge of duty reached us from that vivid picture of vice and misery not far from our doors? Was it not all a hallucination—this concern for others, this tragic picture? These are whispers that beset all

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of us at times. We are all prone to doubt the value of our own spiritual experience, to wonder if after all God is so real as we sometimes imagine, Jesus Christ so wonderful, the Bible so fine, and the duty so clear.

Some people, indeed, are in that place of perplexity about the whole business of religious experience. There are scientists who take the point of view that religion is just a kind of compensation thrown up by our protesting spirits as a makeweight against the ills of life—a kind of artificial dug-out into which we run for shelter from things we are afraid to meet, and a world we cannot face alone. Time and again the longing comes on us all for signs, for assurances that we are right. It is this craving which in part has made the Roman Church lay down the doctrine of infallible truth. We all seek guarantees; we do not want to take any risks, especially if the risk means some sacrifice or suffering. So we seek for assurance, for proof that we are on the right road. Bunyan tells in "Grace Abounding" how he went about for a long time uncertain whether or not he was a child of God, unwilling to venture on his own spiritual experience. As he was walking one day from Bedford to Elstow he came on a puddle of water which suggested to him to try to work a miracle, to prove whether or not he had faith. "The temptation was hot upon me," he says. "I must say to the puddles which were in the horsepads, 'Be dry.'" He could not make up his mind, however, to put his faith to the test. He reasoned

that if nothing happened he would then be sure he had no faith. Thus he was tossed, as he puts it, "between the devil and his own ignorance," and so perplexed that he stumbled along in utter despondency for months. Was not this the same kind of perplexity in which Moses found himself, if we read between the lines? For God said to him, "Surely I will be with thee, and this shall be a token unto thee; when thou hast brought the people up out of Egypt ye shall worship Me upon this mountain."

Does it not just mean this—you can only be sure of a spiritual impulse by making the experiment? A heavenly vision only attests its reality in the pathway of obedience to it. You wonder if a way is right, and in faith you step out on it; then you *know*. There is a reaction of peace in your own soul that countersigns the demand of duty. Things turn out in the end in a way that makes you sure. You feel constrained to do a difficult kindness; is it only a whim? Perhaps the person may not like it, so you say. But go on with it and there comes such a flash of gratitude—with perhaps the hint of a tear—into the face of the one you have helped that you know you have been a veritable angel of God. Or you are trying to bring someone into the light of the gospel. You begin to question whether it is worth while to spend so much time on what looks like barren soil. But one day the light breaks, and then the truth of Christ, of which you were almost uncertain, becomes alive with a

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fresh flame which is the glory of all your day. Matthew Arnold tell in a phrase which has become almost threadbare that "tasks in hours of insight willed may be through hours of gloom fulfilled." But there is more in it than that. It is generally in hours of gloom that tasks of insight have to be fulfilled. And it is only so that they are verified to have been of God. As we fulfil them they renew the splendour of their birth in our souls. They recover the fire divine which made them shine in a heavenly vision. It is always the people who are doing God's work who are keenest on it. It is the active missionary people who are most confident about missions. The spiritual pessimists are never found among the zealous workers. Only among the spectators who see the vision and let it go do we find the croakers and the doubters. Those who have seen Christ and followed Him are the people to whom He becomes more and more ; it is those who have seen and not followed who are the disillusioned. Faith followed translates itself into the fact of an invincible experience. "This shall be a token unto thee," said God ; "when thou hast brought the people out of Egypt ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

But let us look a little deeper. Was there not a suggestion here, that unless he followed this command of God the experience of Horeb was over for him, its radiant communion ended, its quiet peace shattered, its visions no longer possible ? For years he had been serving God there, and the

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experience had been wonderful. But now that stage was over. Fuller light had come and he must walk in it. If he would keep the communion of Horeb, he must leave it. If he would preserve the light in his soul, he must follow where it led. That vision of higher duty once seen would disturb his quiet for ever. In short, God said to Moses, "You will only preserve this experience of fellowship you have had here by leaving it behind." It is the old story over again, of the monk who had a vision of Christ in his cell and was enraptured, when at the moment there came a knock at his cell door calling him to a disagreeable duty. He was disturbed and half annoyed to leave his ecstasy; but he obeyed, and when he returned the vision was still there and a voice said, "Hadst thou stayed I must have fled."

In a word, we can only keep our fellowship with God by walking in the light which it reveals; the experience of communion and the revelation of duty go hand in hand. We find God on a certain level of life. It may be a high level or it may be a low one. Thank God, He takes us just as we are into His fellowship. There were no conditions laid down for the returning prodigal save the condition he fulfilled by returning; though some people make the mistake of imagining they must in some way make themselves good enough for that high fellowship. They strive and struggle to screw up the mood of their souls or the tone of their character, till the strain is almost too much for them. Or they conjure

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up what is really a fiction, and try to make believe it is themselves ; when all the time God wants nothing but reality. God is ready to begin fellowship with any man at any level of need or knowledge, though he be as ignorant of Christianity as a Hottentot or as vile as any wastrel of the streets. He will begin with a man in the gutter, if only he be ready to leave the gutter. That is a fact we are in danger of forgetting with our tremendous demand for a moral Christianity. A man does not need to know very much of God to make a beginning with him in a redeeming experience—if only he will be sincere. In point of fact it was people like the publicans and harlots that Christ found it easiest to get in touch with ; they had no shelters from His light, no rags of self-righteousness—nothing which, shutting out the light that rebuked, shut out also the love that saved. They were open to all experience, ready to take it for what it was worth, and the message of Jesus came to them, like heavenly music to a starved heart amid the cursing and riot of a slum alley. God meets us just as we are, and reaches out to us His saving fellowship. There were no hope for us if He did not take the initiative. As Pascal puts it, “ We had not sought Thee, hadst Thou not already found us.”

But there are moral conditions of this spiritual communion. Light breaks, and our eyes open to it. A voice in our ears whispers of duty to be done, of wrongs to be put right—some twisted thing to be straightened out, perhaps ; and it is

not easy. That is why religion has sometimes been called a grey thing. Its light looks stern and cold as it falls upon the tinsel of cheap or unworthy things. But it is light and the question rises, What are we going to do about it? When once we have seen the higher way we cannot stay on the lower level and keep the fellowship that came to us there. So long as we stand and hesitate the light will remain stern and grey, disturbing, shattering, making dispeace in our shabby world. Only as we face the duty it demands, or the fight to which it calls us, will the glory return and the smile come back upon the face of God. Perhaps that is just why the joy and inspiration of the Christian life is weak for some of us. The poet in his hymn puts the question,

“ Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord ? ”

If that be our mood, it is worth while to examine ourselves and see if the joy did not depart at the place of some disloyalty. Have we not been expecting our experience to be permanent on the same moral level as that on which we found it, and so to speak, Christ went on and left us standing? The Christian life is a journey forward; it is not a spiritual retreat. It is a march; not a rest camp behind the lines. We cannot keep the fellowship of God in any compromise with an unconquered temptation or a neglected duty. Christian experience must grow by the exercise of fresh insight

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and new obedience, or it degenerates into a mere nursing of old memories. Where the light falls we must follow, though it seem to lead us out into the storm, away from the quiet resting-place of faith and love. This shall be the token that I am with you, that you shall keep the experience of Horeb only by leaving it.

Now this is how God is ever leading us to higher things. The process is by stages. Do not let us deny to any man the name of Christian, though he be very far from being wholly Christian. The disciples were learners, not graduates in the school of Christ. God leads us like children who learn by stages. The process is by the increase of light. At first there are things which are neutral. Then the light touches them and at once they become live moral issues. It is the same with the Church as it is with individuals. It advances by a process of progressive enlightenment. "Such is the order of God's enlightening His Church," wrote John Milton, "to deal out and dispense by degrees His beam as our earthly eyes may best sustain it." There are people who expect some changes to come as by magic, forgetting that all true advance in civilisation is by the gradual quickening of conscience. Only bit by bit does the light break from the truth of Christ, though it is all there in Him. It is a question of our power to see it. But once a thing has been seen there is no more peace for the Church till it has been faced, no more living peace, no more sense of fellowship with God. For

light that is not followed only disturbs ; it does not heal or inspire.

Think, for instance, of the missionary impulse of the Church. It only awoke in Britain about a century ago. When William Carey went to India his project was denounced by the East India Company as "harmful, dangerous, imprudent, pernicious, fantastic." But the light was up for Carey and he followed it. Then the light spread and it spreads still, and there is no real fellowship with God, no vital health for the Church of to-day, without obedience to this light. She cannot find the old communion save on the new terms ; only, so to speak, as she comes back to Horeb from her expedition into Egypt. Or think of slavery. For centuries it was neutral. John Newton the hymn writer was once a slave trader, and tells us that on his last voyage to the African coast for a cargo he "experienced sweeter and more frequent hours of divine communion than he had ever known before." On such a voyage, it is almost incredible to learn, he wrote "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds." The light had not come, but at last it broke. The call came to go down to Egypt and set the people free. Slavery became a living moral issue. There could be no compromise with it. It was a real touchstone of spiritual quality. In England the battle was fierce ; in America it was fiercer, for it had bitten deep into the life of the nation. Some churches would not face the issue. The pulpits were tuned to the conscience of the pews. But

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great voices were lifted. Men like Beecher in Brooklyn and Brooks in Boston called the Church to her task of emancipation and to the full gospel of the sacredness of human personality. The light had come and thenceforth there was no real peace for the church, no vital fellowship with God, till the new level had been reached. So God leads on, sending His light as we can see it, revealing new stages of spiritual progress and calling us to rise to them.

Have we not these new moral issues to-day? What of the demand for peace, for instance? Many minds are questioning the method of war as the way of settling disputes, or even of achieving justice. Not so long ago war was regarded as spiritually neutral to the Christian conscience, or even as an enterprise which gave a fine platform for the exhibition of Christian virtues. The department of international peace was left to the care of a handful of people who were regarded as cranks or faddists. It was the highest we knew. But the light is up to-day. God's beam shines clearly on a higher way—the way of co-operation and goodwill, the patient building up of international friendship. The light is up. The question of international relations is a living moral issue. It concerns our communion with God. There can be no real peace and no deep fellowship with God for the Church on any lower level of outlook.

The same thing is true of our social relationships. Once the ills of society were not regarded as the

Church's concern. But bit by bit the light spread. It reached our prisons and made the care of the criminal a moral issue. It touched our industries, and Mrs. Browning rang home to the conscience of the community "The Cry of the Children" toiling in mines or factories twelve hours a day or more for a pittance. It is hardly credible that the Church of those days for the most part took her stand against the reformers. But the light grew and it grows still, disturbing our peace as we think of the troubles of society, its strifes, its miseries—conditions for which every class is in part responsible. The light is up and we must face it. A more Christian way of corporate life will become more and more a living moral issue for the Church, such that there can be no real health in us save as we face the light and walk in it.

It is true that religious experience has always the same elements, the sense of peace with God, the joy of forgiveness, the inspiration of His presence; these strands of gold run through religious experience in all the centuries. But we find them under new conditions. For God always comes to us in the actual world in which we live. We know that God loves us, but all that that love means we do not know. Paul saw into the depths of it as a man sees into a translucent sea when the sun is up, and his verdict was that there were depths beyond depths; as life unfolds, its meaning grows deeper and more far-reaching. That is one effect of the influence of Christ upon us, to deepen the meaning of all great

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words. Love, faith, goodness, duty, salvation—they all grow richer as we walk with God, like pearls, which are said to take their quality from the wearer on whose breast they lie.

“New occasions teach new duties, time makes
ancient good uncouth,
They must upward still and onward, who would
keep abreast of truth.”

Lowell was pointing out a very common danger—the danger of luxuriating in the light of the past, instead of walking in the light of the present, as it falls upon some fresh citadel to be stormed for God, or on some bit of “No-man’s Land” to be charted and brought under the harrow and the plough of His will. We are pilgrims—that is the point. Our truly Christian hymns are marching songs. Our only rest is in moving with the unfolding purpose. Our only peace is walking in the challenging light. So the private place of communion which we seem to leave at the call of duty and service becomes ours again in an enlarging fellowship—the fellowship of a world redeemed. It will only be complete when the nations shall bring their honour and glory into it, and they shall come from the east and the west, and the north and the south and shall sit down with us in the Kingdom of our Father.

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VERY REV. EDWARD ARTHUR BURROUGHS, D.D.

*"The world passeth away, and the desire of it ;
but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."*

I John ii, 17.

IT is strange how death sometimes seems to be needed in order to call attention to the true meaning of life, even as it took the world war to set most men thinking seriously about the true conditions of peace. While a man still lives, there is apt to be truth in the sarcasm of the Psalmist : " So long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee." Prosperity has always been an excellent passport, and well-doing often seems to weigh less with one's next-door neighbour than an obvious ability to do oneself well. But that is only in life. The advent of death forces even shallow contemporary judgment to take up the measuring-rod of eternity—to see the man we consorted with yesterday as posterity will see him, should his name survive. Courtesy may soften hard facts in his obituary notice ; but once his funeral is over, he must stand or fall by the same criterion as history applies to the great names of the past. And may

* A Sermon preached before the University of Bristol on " Founder's Day." Local allusions have been omitted.

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one not claim with Goethe that, in the long run, history judges as we are told that God will judge?

“*Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht.*”

In the long run men do appraise their fellows not by their achievements but by their ideals: not by the amount of disturbance they made in their own generation, but by the ultimate bearing of their work upon the ultimate happiness of mankind. A Napoleon is “Great” to his contemporaries. Yet one short century has been enough to make us conscious rather how little of his work remains. And we can see that it failed because it was selfish. Work which would last must be in accordance with world-principles, done in the interests of the Whole, with the sense of the Whole as its inspiration. As our historical perspective lengthens, greatness and goodness approach more nearly together. The names which posterity really loves to honour are always those of the children of God—individuals in whom the Spirit of the Whole has found expression. And by common consent of sceptics as well as believers, the greatest Figure on the stage of history is He Who is also the Ideal Man, Whom Christian faith addresses as the Eternal Son of the World Father. “The world passeth away, and the desire of it; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

I

This is a truth which, I think, is brought home to us by any such "Commemoration of Founders and Benefactors" as that for which we have been called together; and it should be no small cause of thankfulness to a young University that its early days have been watched over by so many men of the true "Founder" breed—a type so common in earlier centuries and so rare to-day. "The glory of God" is no longer a current, or at least an avowed, incentive to public service in days when the chief use of wealth is apparently to make one's present comfortable and one's future, so far as may be, secure. Yet, in the long run, it is the motive behind the work that gives it value and permanence, not the amount of money sunk in it. Money is a neutral standard of value. It becomes an asset or a handicap to its owner and to the community, according to its owner's philosophy. That is what our generation so desperately needs to learn. Real value always depends on and springs from personality; and a man's personality—his power to make his other powers, material or mental, a *plus* or a *minus* quantity in the scheme of things—depends on his creed, his religion, his philosophy of life. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." That, after all, is the chief lesson which any University has to teach to deserve its title—indicative of kinship with the Whole. And one way in which it teaches it is by commemorating its Founders

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and Benefactors as men who, possessed of that which St. John writes down as "the world" which "passes," knew how to make their possession permanent by linking it with the plan of God for the progress of man. "The world passeth away, and the desire of it; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

But of course the main task of a University is to equip the ordinary man and woman with the sort of knowledge and outlook that will make their essential life-work permanent though their names may be forgotten at once. It should seek to save them, in other words, from that wasting of themselves which is the penalty of not hitching their wagons to a star—and that the right star. Our task, I say, is to take the raw material of the individual—the five-talent and the one-talent sort alike—with his necessarily limited experience, his probably too narrow view of what his University is to do for him, and open his eyes to the width of his heritage, make him feel his kinship with the Whole. That is where a University differs from (say) a vocational training college or a technical institute or a foundation dedicated to research. Research is an incidental, not the characteristic, task of a University. A true University stands for an attempt to see life and the universe as a whole, and should seek, above all, to equip men with a true philosophy; knowing, with Socrates, that "the unexamined life is not a life for a man." How is the world situated in this respect to-day?

How far is our higher education on the way to achieve its object ?

II

Is it too much to say that the chief danger ahead of our national education is a spiritual one—the danger of confirming, instead of combating, a material outlook on life ? Is it too much to say that we are a desperately “worldly” age—in the broadest sense—at a time when, really, “worldliness” ought to be impossible for men who can think ? The logic of the whole situation points the other way. A sense of consistency, a really scientific respect for evidence, would make it impossible for the world to behave to-day as a large part of it is still content to behave. But, as a French writer put it during the war, “In England logic enjoys no prestige.” Unlike our late enemies, with their instinctive passion for world-views—*Weltansichten*—we have very little natural sense of the Whole. We are empiricists by tradition—taking things as they come, and “muddling through.” And that is why we are so capable of an inconsistency which sometimes borders on suicidal mania. A secular civilisation has become as unworkable as we might, if we cared, have known it would. Yet we go on with the practical applications of our pre-war materialism when, by the tests alike of scientific research and of everyday results, materialism is little more than a mid-Victorian heresy. We certainly

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need a touch of the stern otherworldliness of my text and its context to redeem us from a position so little creditable to educated men : to rescue us from

“ Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.”

“ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the glamour of life—is not from the Father, but from the world itself. And the world passeth away, and the desire of it ; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

It is a peculiarly hard saying for our modern world, what with its tradition of scientific materialism, its belief in scientific Utopias, its passion for personal liberty and expansion, its movements, even within strictly Christian thought, away from asceticism and puritanism towards a view of Christianity as the higher humanism. Must an age to which (for instance) the sense of beauty means so much, and “ the glamour of life ” is so intriguing, really believe that these have no place in the eternal order, that they “ are not from the Father, but from the world ” which “ passeth away ” ? The question is, of course, too large to debate in passing ; but I raise it, because it seems to me that the answer bears fundamentally on the prospects of a spiritual revival in the world to-day, and also that, apart from such a revival—a real swinging round from

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our decayed materialism to a spiritual philosophy of life—the century before us can hardly fail to mark the beginning of a new Dark Age. And I shall venture to indicate a solution, because here, surely, lies the strategic line of resistance to all the forces of disintegration around us, both those deliberately unleashed in the name of “the world-revolution” and those which have inevitably followed in the wake of a long war and a short-sighted peace. It is nothing less than a re-education of humanity that we need: a mobilisation of all the influences, professional and what I might call casual alike, which go to the shaping of human thought and character, and the directing of them to produce just that sort of outlook which ought to result from a University training. And, if so, it is more than ever important that the Universities should stand solid for a spiritual philosophy themselves.

The present situation would be impossible if the community were permeated with the true “University” point of view—centring in so clear a sense of the Whole that it becomes discomfort, even torture, to feel that your life and conduct consist of a group of mutually inconsistent fragments. What education, at all its stages, ought to labour most to build up is the capacity for correlation, for forming a system, and so for living “according to plan.” That will be the best antidote for our modern form of Satanism—the worship of disintegration, revolution, as such. The success of

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education must be judged by the kind of systems men work out for themselves, the sort of objectives they set before them. They will judge aright if they have what Plato calls the "synoptic" faculty, that of "gathering together" (as he puts it) "the promiscuous lessons of boyhood into one perspective, revealing their natural relations to each other and to the nature of the universe."* And that faculty, he says, it must be the task of higher education to induce in what he calls "the class of twenty years old," in other words, the University student.

III

To judge by the present world-wide bewilderment, the loss of any constant sense of direction, any clear vision of a goal—a loss reflected as clearly as anywhere in the foggy, tentative politics of to-day it is from lack of just this wider vision that our generation is suffering most. An argument, you will say, for extending University education. Yes, but equally an argument for making sure that the education given is always "University education" in the sense the name implies; above all, that it sends a man or woman forth equipped with a working philosophy *which will work out*.

I have quoted Matthew Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," where he, the mid-Victorian Freethinker, confesses his secret yearning for the

* Plato, *Republic*, 537c.

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faith his intellect seemed to forbid, his disappointment with a world which, along with its faith, had also lost its energy.

“Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—
I come to shed them at their side.

* * * * *

“Our fathers watered with their tears
This sea of time on which we sail;
Their voices were in all men’s ears
Who passed within their puissant trail.
Still the same ocean round us raves,
But we stand mute, and watch the waves.”

How true it is of our day too—but with how much less justification! Much water has flowed under all the bridges since Matthew Arnold wrote. The scientific materialism then in the ascendant has been disowned by science itself, as well as disproved by bitter practical experience. As Lord Balfour puts it in his Gifford Lectures, delivered in 1913, “We now know too much about matter to be materialists.” Moreover, we have been through the world war. We might, we ought to, have gone over frankly—not to the faiths ingrained with magic which Matthew Arnold and his generation rightly knew must be left behind, but to that profound yet

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simple spiritual philosophy which the New Testament enshrines, and of which perhaps the most perfect summary is in the eight short clauses of the Lord's Prayer. There the whole outlook is quite in harmony with modern thought, with its rational emphasis on Personality ; only it fills in the centre of the circle, where modern agnosticism leaves a blur, with the figure of a personal Father in Heaven, Whose character and kingdom and will are to be the standard for all His children. So it grounds man's higher life on a solid basis, moral and mystical at once, and from the Divine Fatherhood a new human brotherhood naturally springs.

That, I say, is the faith to which we should have boldly gone over in view of the facts. Then, having given "glory to God in the highest," we should have found peace growing on earth "among men of good will." As it is, we have not dared to be "synoptic" in Plato's sense. And so we have, on the one hand, scepticism and superstition flourishing strangely side by side ; and, on the other, in the very spheres of science and learning, for which we have vindicated the right to detach themselves from their spiritual background, we find tentativeness and specialisation, because real creation and discovery are only possible in an atmosphere of faith. The true answer, I think, to the difficulty noted already—how to reconcile the typically modern outlook to the otherworldly dualism of St. John in my text—is to point out that the antithesis between "the world" and "the Father"

only arises when the Father is ignored. It disappears again when the prayer of His family comes to be "Thy will be done *in earth* as it is in heaven."

A generation which once more centred life in God would be able to say "Two worlds are ours," and to make the best of both of them.

Nothing so quickens and fructifies the sense of beauty as the sense of God ; nothing so increases "the glamour of life" as conscious and intelligent partnership in a supernatural order. In the splendid words of one of the earliest Christian Apologies, dating from A.D. 130, "Because they (the Christians) acknowledge the goodness of God towards them, therefore on account of them there flows forth the beauty that is in the earth." It is the world *without God* that "passeth away" ; it is the desire for the gifts *without the Giver* that finds them turn to dust when grasped. Once bring God in, and His works gain meaning and value and permanence ; much as we have seen that the value of money depends on the personality of its possessor. "The world passeth away, and the desire of it ; but he that doeth the will of God" not only himself "abideth for ever," but finds a new solidity, a new satisfaction, a new coherence, in all that he gains from or learns of God's world.

That should be the result of University teaching : and that is what our generation desperately needs. And the sacrifice (if it be such) which it asks of our intellectuals, who know how hollow the old unfaiths are grown, is to come out boldly for the new

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spiritual outlook which all the needs of our day demand. Nothing else could strike such a blow at scepticism and superstition at once, or bring in so quickly the greatness of a new age of faith. Irreligion has, somehow, come to be regarded as freedom ; it only spells " self-determination " really, and there is no slavery so great as being at the mercy of oneself.

" From servitude to Freedom's *name*
Free thou thy mind, in bondage pent ;
Depose the fetish, and proclaim
The things that are more excellent."

But till the leaders lead in that direction, can we expect the rank and file to follow ? The prerogative and penalty of leadership is that it is called to " give itself away," to act according to convictions and not according to circumstances, that so the raw material of circumstances may be " moulded nearer to the heart's desire." Our need is plain enough to-day ; and it is one which a lead from the intellectuals is urgently called for to supply. We need the binding influence of a goal, a real direction, if we are to get anywhere at all. And to be thus bound is, even for the intellect, the pre-condition of becoming free. For when that binding influence comes in the form of a Guide as well as a goal—a Guide for Whose friendship all our hearts are shaped, and in Whose friendship alone they can be satisfied—then you have the ideal conditions for liberty, happiness and per-

manent achievement at once. The moral and the mystical need are both satisfied. "In knowledge of Him standeth our eternal life; His service is perfect freedom." So we can, after all, make the best of both worlds—when we claim them both in the name of "Our Father," and, by making His Son our Saviour, become capable of doing His will. "The world passeth away, and the desire of it; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

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WHEN THE COURTESY OF JESUS SEEMED TO FAIL

REV. FREDERICK WILLIAM NORWOOD, D.D.

" But He answered her not a word."

Matthew xv, 23.

IF one were asked what was the outstanding characteristic of Jesus in His dealings with men and women, one might easily reply, His courtesy. We have a shrewd idea what we mean by the word, though we have had occasion enough to question its lineal descent. The word is "court-esy" and suggests courtliness. It is redolent of the age of chivalry and reminds us of the time when they who frequented courts practised sedulously or were supposed to inherit, the graces of politeness, urbanity, courtliness. That is a noble tradition and one which it is to everybody's advantage should never be departed from.

Like every other human ideal it is subject to failure. Courts may become hollow. Polished speech may resemble a rapier, and urbanity may but thinly cover contempt. We have not forgotten John Milton's sturdy words:—

" And trust thy honest offered courtesy
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds.

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With smoky rafters, than in tapestry walls,
And courts of princes, where it first was named,
And yet is most pretended."

Words may suffer moral degeneration as well as human beings, as who does not remember that the word courtesan had also its original connection with courts, where it had often enough no other resemblance to courtliness than the decoration of the person, the simulation of pleasing manners and even of affection which was not truly felt.

There ought to be a society for the reclamation of fallen words, as well as for fallen people.

But this word courtesy must be preserved, and who that knows its choicest meaning would not place it like a garland upon the brows of Jesus? Though born in a manger He had always the air of a prince. He was unfailingly courteous, and His courtesy had the rare quality of always being as unstrained as it was sincere. It had not a smooth side for the great and a rough side for the poor. He was as princely among His fishermen friends as when Pontius Pilate, even while he crucified Him, felt constrained to have put above His head the inscription, "This is Jesus the King." He reclaimed courtesans by being courtly. He caused His intimates to become gentlemen without ever mentioning the word. He was no bluff democrat, slapping men upon the shoulder in token of His gracious descent to their level; His unfailing courtesy made them instinctively wipe their feet, leaving

market-place and fishing-boat as though they crossed the mosaic pavement of a palace to walk as courtiers with the king. Upon everyone who has truly walked with Him since He has left the aureole of courtesy.

Now everybody knows that public life, power and popularity may easily roughen a man's spirit. One may be too busy to be discriminatingly thoughtful. Absorbed in great affairs, he may look with unseeing eyes over the heads of humble folk who have no apparent connection with them. Accustomed to command, politeness of speech may seem a weakening of authority. If urbanity be assumed as a means to popularity, it may be thrown off as warriors throw off armour in moments of relaxation. He who uses his fellows as mere instruments for his own aggrandisement may leave them to rust when he has no further use for them. Sensitive people always fear for the powerful and popular, lest they show the rough edge of callousness or brutality.

Who that has read Alexandre Dumas' description of William of Orange can ever forget again that power and the jealous love of popularity may easily cause deterioration of the finer qualities of human character. "The eye keen like that of a bird of prey, the long aquiline nose, the finely cut mouth which he generally kept open, or rather which gaped like the edges of a wound; the prowling ways which were the very type of a suspecting master, or an unquiet thief. . . ."

The ancients were not blind to these things, as is evidenced by their saying:

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“What difference is there between the figure of the conqueror and that of the pirate? The difference only between the eagle and the vulture; serenity or restlessness.”

The eagle is serene, the vulture restless; but both alike are birds of prey.

It is worth a thought at the time of a General Election. They who aspire to govern their fellows need the prayerful discernment of those who expose them to the most ruthless assaults upon character. If a man be very successful in business, very profuse in wealth, very powerful in his influence, they who love him best should pray for him; he should certainly pray for himself, lest the finer blossoms of character are nipped by cruel frosts or withered by burning heat. And there is no surer test of intrinsic greatness than whether courtesy to all men, unstrained and sincere, can endure through the springtime of promise, the summer of power, the autumn of ripe achievement, and the winter of declining years.

Now all men would confess that Jesus withstood all these temptations and wore the white flower of courtesy in His heart even down to the Cross. Even there He had time to hear the impassioned cry of a thief and to welcome him to paradise as though they two were going to meet the King in acknowledged fellowship.

But all this, which no one could deny, only throws into darker relief His attitude towards the Canaanitish woman who is the subject of our text,

It is the only instance upon record which shakes our faith in His unfailing courtesy.

Perhaps it is well there is just one case, which by its very contrast throws His constancy into relief, otherwise we might have accepted the courtesy of Jesus as we often accept the sweetness of a singer or the eloquence of an orator as though either were a mere natural efflorescence and not a carefully cultivated gift. The goodness of Jesus was a great achievement, else why did He so persistently pray?

But why, on the other hand, did He treat this woman so? The evangelist does not explain; indeed, he makes us feel as though each dark detail was a blow from a whip. There are three of them. First, "He answered her not a word." Second, he seemed narrow in His sympathies; "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the *house of Israel*." Third, He seemed utterly contemptuous; "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the *dogs*."

Here is a handle for the enemies of Jesus! Did not the evangelist see it? Why did he not add a word of explanation or extenuation? Was it that he entirely agreed with this attitude of Jesus, or did he consider that the final act of mercy cancelled it entirely out? Did he not see that the question would arise whether ultimate mercy could excuse preliminary callousness or contempt?

Fortunately there is no other similar incident in all the wonderful record of that Life of Lives. Had

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there been more our confidence would have been shaken. As it is we have passed it over with comparative ease because we prefer to take the evidence of a thousand incidents rather than that of one only. Jesus was consistently courteous, therefore we should judge Him by the general tone of His life rather than by the one apparent variation.

There is at least something human there which will justify a moment's pause. Many a friendship has been wrecked by one deed, by one word. It came like an arrow and remained quivering in the heart. Because of the pain caused, all the manifold and continuous kindnesses were forgotten. One doubt has shattered a lifetime's confidence. Are not our palaces of love as brittle as glass? A whole reputation has often been withered by one deed or word. If even our confidence in Jesus must withstand the jolt of an apparent obstacle, do not let our most cherished human relationships fall broken to the earth because of one unexplained perturbation, or even one admitted flaw. These remarks are not offered as an adequate explanation of the conduct of Jesus upon this occasion, but at least they may well have human significance for some of us.

The silence of Jesus is profoundly suggestive. It is recorded that "He answered her not a word." If we had naught to guide us in the understanding of this story but the silence of Jesus we might well turn away from it entirely baffled. For nothing is so inconclusive as silence. How we crave for a word,

and would almost rather have the word we dread than no word at all. For words give a foothold to the understanding, but silence envelops all possibilities in its dark cloak and leaves the mind a prey to uncertainty. Hence we resent it, reaching out passionate hands of protest into the dark.

We all know that faith amid silence is the supreme test of loyalty. Much friendship there is in this world which can only persist by means of frequent reiteration. The deepest waters are the silent waters.

The silence of God is faith's bitterest trial. It is overwhelming to the soul at times to realise that amid all the ages in which men have cried to Him, seeking help or guidance, never once has His voice been heard. To pain and the sense of outrage, amid the flagrant miscarriage of justice and the sufferings of the innocent, He has presented the attitude of imperturbable silence. Faith has many times staggered under its weight. Rare souls profess that they have heard Him speak to them at such times; most of those who have trusted Him have known that grace was given unto them. But silence is the *métier* of God! We can only judge by His general benevolence that His mercy is unfaltering. Maybe the silence of God is the courtesy of Omnipotence. If, as all believers confess, there is grace which strengtheneth the weak and upholdeth the humble, it is better than the vociferation of the Deity. Whoso would trust God must trust His silence.

THE COURTESY OF JESUS SEEMED TO FAIL

Returning to the story, it seems clear to me that the silence of Jesus was His initial courtesy. The disciples would have silenced *her*. "Send her away," they said, "for she breaketh the silence of thy thoughts." Jesus was silent to her; He answered her not a word, *but He would not have her sent away.*

I think the woman was an intrusion upon His deep and wise plans. She threatened to thrust Him into complications with the Canaanites when He earnestly wished to restrict His mission to the Jews. She would go, as the woman of Samaria went, saying to her people, "Come, see this man. Is not He the Christ?" And heathendom would flood into the Kingdom of God before the sluice-gates were under control. Jesus would check by His silence this woman from being the innocent cause of a calamitous departure from sound policy.

Jesus was of the same opinion as the disciples, but for an entirely different reason. When He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," He said what they also believed. But each adopted the same policy for opposite reasons. The disciples looked upon the heathen with contempt; they regarded Him as ISRAEL'S Saviour and Teacher. Why should the heathen share in Him?

Jesus coveted the heathen, but had method in His purpose. He would give Himself to the Jews that they in turn might be the Saviours of the heathen. They were God's chosen race of prophets and priests. The days were not many that He

could give to His mission of preparation. The bitter racial issue must not be raised before the time had come. His own disciples were not ready yet for that development.

There are things that a far-seeing mind may see but may not be able to explain to those whose vision is more limited. He would not send her away—that His soul refused to do—His only armour was that of silence. “He answered her not a word.”

But the woman would not be denied. Mother-love had entered the lists on behalf of her child and would acknowledge no truce. She came and worshipped him, uttering the simplest and most prevailing of all prayers, “Lord, help me.”

Jesus turned now and looked into the eyes of desperately longing, self-sacrificing motherhood. The disciples were looking into her eyes too, but they saw something quite different. Where He saw love, they only saw pertinacity. What to Him was noble to them was mean. Where He saw vicarious sorrow they saw shameless pugnacity. He knew that her motherhood was radiantly selfless but would not be denied. They thought in her but a determined, selfish woman who would not be shaken off. To them she was a heathen dog, to Him a child of God in whom the divine love was translucent.

Into His mind came the thought that was in their minds. It came like the stab of a knife, venomous with hate and prejudice. He knew it for the false thing it was. How His soul loathed the sectarian bitternesses which cloud the fair faces

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of the great humanities. He took the loathsome thing that was in their hearts upon His lips for a moment and flung it down that she might show what the soul's pure feeling would do with it.

"It is not meet," said He, "to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."

Their thought, though His words. Had their lips spoken it the lines of the mouth would have been tight and hard, the eyes fierce and cruel. She winced at the words, but looking at His eyes and lips, she did not despair but even smiled as mother-wit came to the help of mother-love. "Yea, Lord," said she, "for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

And there the foul thing shrivelled in the heat of the fierce elemental passion which leapt like a live coal out of the bosom of God. The Son of Mary flung wide the door of mercy to motherhood, which is neither of the Jew nor the Gentile, but is human—and Divine.

I hold that the place where the courtesy of Jesus seemed to fail is the place where the elemental strength of His humanity is clearly revealed. He to whom, almost alone among life's manifold experiences, was not given that of fatherhood, demonstrated His knowledge of its vicarious sacrifice. Life could give to Him no wife, but did not deny to Him a mother. Mary's Son was the most courtly believer in motherhood the world has seen. He trusted its white flame to destroy the mean ties of man's narrowness, even when they were uttered

in the name of religion. Whoso would call another man a "dog," let him fling his vile epithet into the flame of the love of that man's mother. Here is the nearest thing we humans ever see to that Divine pertinacity of love which will not let us go.

"If I were damned in body and soul,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine,
I know whose kiss would make me whole,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine."

Let us make a bonfire of our mean racial antipathies and our class prejudices on the altar of the great Humanities; for whatever shows us man at his best shows us the glory of God as when the moon, full-phased, swims into our ken from behind the clouds.

To-day some mothers are bringing their babes to this church to be baptised in Christ's Name. May all political systems, tariff policies, economic combinations, racial rivalries be made, by the seeing eye of man, to come to their final testing before the needs of a child and the protecting sacrificing spirit of parenthood. And may the courtesy of Jesus rest like an aureole upon the brows of all them who follow Him.

REV. F. B. MEYER, B.A., D.D.

*REV. FREDERICK BROTHERTON
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“THE FIRST MIRACLE THAT HE WROUGHT”

REV. FREDERICK BROTHERTON MEYER, B.A., D.D.

John ii, 1-II.

THIS is one of those precious memories which the mother of our Lord pondered in her heart, and doubtless often recited in that home to which St. John led her from the Cross. Several incidents in this Gospel may be traced to that fellowship in love and sorrow which, until her death, must have linked His mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Is it not wonderful that this was our Lord's first miracle! Had we been asked to select one which seemed most appropriate to stand as the frontispiece of His earthly ministry, we should have selected the raising of Lazarus, the calming of the storm, or the feeding of the hungry crowds; but who would have chosen this? The inventive genius of man would have conceived an introductory scene which combined the chief features of the Transfiguration and of the Giving of the Law. How different is the simplicity of this incident!

In the previous chapter we are told that the Apostles beheld in Jesus Christ the Glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father; and when we ask

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one of those eye-witnesses to give a sample of its choicest manifestations, we are conducted to a little village in the highlands of Galilee, at the distance of an afternoon's walk from Nazareth, where the Master sits at a simple marriage feast amongst His friends, and makes wine out of water to supply their lack.

The miracles of this Gospel are signs (xx, 30), carefully selected as bearing upon the special characteristics of our Lord's person and work, which the Evangelist had set himself to portray. There was a distinct purpose in His performing this miracle as His first, and in its being set so prominently at the front of this narrative. We are told that He manifested forth His glory ; and we reverently ask, How ? As we strive to answer that question, may we again sit at His table and hear Him speak !

I

It was His glory to show that true religion is consistent with ordinary life. There is a common tendency to associate the highest type of religion with rigorous austerity of life, as if the human were too common to be divine. We fancy that he whose thoughts commune most deeply with the Eternal must be a stern, silent and solitary type of man. This ideal of the religious life was exemplified in the old prophets, who dwelt in the solitudes of unfrequented deserts and hills, withdrawn from

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the common joys and engagements and ties of human existence ; only emerging now and again to pour on the ears of awestruck crowds the burning words of the living God. Such had been John the Baptist. The desert, his home ; the locust and wild honey, his fare ; the camel's cloth, his dress. And we might have expected to find the Son of God more rigorous still in His isolation ; rearing Himself in severe and solitary grandeur, like the Jungfrau among the alps.

But no ! His early years are spent, not in a desert, but in a home. He comes eating and drinking. He moves freely amongst men as one of themselves, He interweaves His life with the life of the home, the market-place, and the street. And in pursuance of this purpose He wrought His first miracle at a peasant's wedding.

Travelling by easy stages from the Jordan valley, He had reached Galilee. Finding His mother gone from Nazareth, He followed her over the hills to Cana, and for her sake was invited with His six new-made followers to the rustic feast. It was a time of simple-hearted enjoyment. " The bridegroom crowned with flowers with which his mother had crowned him in the day of his espousals ; the bride adorned with her jewels, sitting apart among the women." But, though He was the Son of God, no cloud would veil His face or cast a restraining spell upon the guests.

This is the harder type. It is easier, like the anchorite, to be separated from the world, than,

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like the Saviour, to be in it and not of it. Easier to decline an invitation to the house of the great than to go there and behave as the Son of God. Easier to refuse the things of sense than to use them without abuse. Easier to maintain a life of prayer far from the haunts of men, than to enter them maintaining constant fellowship with God in the unruffled depths of the soul. Nothing but the grace of the Holy Spirit can suffice for this. But this is sufficient if daily and believably sought.

It is most honouring to God. The idea of the ascetic life is that every human feeling is a weakness, and every natural instinct a sin. No woman's caress, no childish voice, no tender love, none of the jewels or flowers of existence, may soften the rigours of that lot. But is not all this a libel on God's original creation? Has He made so great a mistake in creating us that we must thwart His ideal at every step, ere we can rise to our true manhood? Must we make ourselves other than men before we can be saints? Surely, to reason thus is to dishonour the wisdom and love of God in our original creation. And the Incarnation teaches us, as does this miracle, that God does not require an emasculated, but a fulfilled and purified humanity.

It is most useful to the world. Of what use is salt, except in contact with the corrupting carcase? The holiness which builds three tabernacles amid almost inaccessible rocks is of little help to the breaking hearts of demon-possessed men in the valley below. This, at least, is not our Saviour's

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message. "Go," says He, "to Jerusalem and Samaria, to the crowded cities and homes of men. Live amongst them, kindling them with the passion of your holiness. Suffer little children to come to you; publicans and sinners to draw near to you; crowds to follow you. All I ask is that whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, ye should do all to the glory of God."

II

It was His glory to teach the beauty of waiting meekly for God. If ever there was a being who might have claimed to act on the prompting of His own spirit, it was surely our blessed Lord. But there never was one who lived in more absolute and entire dependence on the Father from the first. It comes out very clearly here.

His advent with His friends threatened the whole family with a disgrace, which to the hospitable mind of the Jew would be irreparable. The wine ran short. Mary, who seems to have had considerable influence in the house, was made aware of the fact, and quickly guessed its cause. She could not endure the thought of inflicting, however unconsciously, so great a mortification on that kindly circle, and she suddenly conceived the hope of helping them through Him whom she had been wont to count her obedient son. Why should He not now assume the position which had been predicted from His

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birth? She could not have been deceived in all that had been told her; but it had been long and hard to wait. Yet surely the salutation of the Baptist and gathering of disciples were omens of an approaching change. Why should He not now blossom out into all that splendid glory with which Jewish anticipation invested the Messiah?

Her implied request must have appealed closely to the tender heart of Jesus. All that she felt He felt also. But He could not take His commands from her entreaty, or even from the warmth of His own emotions. He addressed her with a title consistent with the most perfect tenderness—indeed, He used it from His cross; but, waiving her suggestion with a common Aramaic expression, went on to announce that henceforth His eye would be, if possible, more closely fixed on the dial-plate of His Father's will, following the index-finger of His purpose, waiting till it should reach the hour, and the alarum for action should ring out. “Mine hour is not yet come.”

It was thus that He waited or acted throughout His life. The Gospels abound in references to His hour. Before it struck He was calm and peaceful, however pressing might be the apparent need for action. When it struck He acted instantly and decisively. Afterward, He returned unto His rest. This is almost the hardest lesson in Christian living. We listen to the advice of friend; the threatening of foe; the pressure of circumstance. We think we must do something. Like King Saul, we force

ourselves and offer the sacrifice. We pray hurriedly and throw ourselves into the breach, to discover, when too late, that we have run without being sent, and have defeated our own object by too much haste. "My soul, wait thou," might often be addressed to ourselves by ourselves. Not a moment behind God; but not a moment before Him! Ready for His hour to strike!

III

It was His glory to show the inwardness of true religion. In the entrance-hall six stone water-pots were standing, "after the manner of the purifying of the Jews." Their superstitious dread of uncleanness made it necessary to have large supplies of water ever at hand. Without washing no one ate (Mark vii, 3). The feet of each guest were washed on arrival (Luke vii, 44). The washing of cups and jugs and bottles, says the Talmud, went on all day. And in this we have a symbol of that religion which consists in external rites, and is content only if these are maintained.

But the Master turned the water of outward ceremonial washing into wine for inward drinking. Surely there is deep symbolical meaning here, in illustration of which we recall two sentences, the one from the Old Testament, the other from the New. "Thy love is better than wine"; and "Whoso . . . drinketh my blood hath eternal life."

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The most spiritual men in the old Jewish system were constantly emphasising the impotence of mere ritual to save and sanctify the soul. David felt it (Psalm li, 16), Isaiah felt it (Isaiah i, 13), Micah brings it out in clear relief (Micah vi, 7). And here our Lord in this striking miracle seems to say : “ The days of ceremonialism are past ; the system which was sent to teach spiritual ideas by material substances and external rites is at an end, the tedious routine of outward ablutions, which has diverted men’s attention from the inner life and the befitting garb of the soul, must be laid aside ; I am come to teach men to love, to live by faith, to array themselves in robes washed white in My blood, and to rise through close participation in My death to a life of stainless purity and flawless beauty. Not water, but blood ! Not washing, but drinking ! Not the outward cleanliness, however fair and right ; but the purity of the heart, the deliverance of the spirit from the polluting taint of evil ! ” We are not surprised to learn that He cleansed the Temple, and that He told Nicodemus that even he must be born again.

IV

It was His glory to awaken us to see the Divine power in the ordinary processes of nature. The world is full of miracles ; but they are so gradual and quiet that we are often blinded to their wonder,

till the flash of a sudden "sign" awakens us from our strange neglect.

It seems doubtful whether the Lord changed all the contents of the six stone jars, or only that which was drawn from them. The latter would more resemble His way, who gives us, not granaries of grain but *daily* bread; and who deals out supplies of *daily* strength. But, even if He had turned all the water into wine, there would be no obstacle to our faith. The sin of drunkenness was not the sin of Palestine, as it is of London; and therefore did not need the special methods of prevention which the principles of His Gospel now lead us to adopt. Also we must remember that the light wines of the Galilean vintage were very different to the brandied intoxicants with which we are too familiar.

But this is the interesting point: that we see compressed into a single flash the same power that works throughout the wine-lands every summer, transforming the dew and rain into the juices that redden the drooping cluster of the vines. The superficial man looks at this miracle and cries: "Oh, wondrous day that beheld so great a deed!" The spiritual man looks at it, and whilst not under-rating its marvel, walks the world with a new reverence, because he knows that the same Divine power is throbbing all around. The power revealed in feeding the five thousand is required to cover the autumn fields with grain. The power needed to raise the dead shows how much is constantly demanded to keep us living. The power that quells

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the storm indicates how much is being exercised to maintain the stable equilibrium of the world.

This is the glory of the miracles of Jesus, that they have taught us to look on the world around us with new and opened eyes. We hear His voice in the summer wind, and amid the roar of the pitiless storm. We catch sight of His form awakening nature from her wintry sleep by His touch, as once the little daughter of Jairus from her couch. We stand spellbound before His power, as once they did who saw the wonderful works of His hands. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. In Him all things consist. And as for this world, it teems with the miraculous :

“ And every common bush aflame with God ;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.”

V

It was His glory to train others, in fellowship with Himself, for holy ministry. The loftiest characteristic in a leader is not in performing all service himself, but in delegating work to others, who are thus trained for a far-reaching extension of his methods and influence. We find a notable instance of it here. Our Lord turned to the leader of the little group of volunteers, who were waiting on the guests, and asked him to have the water-jars filled up. That request was a severe test to their obedient

faith. Those great jars stood in the vestibule of the house. Each would hold about twenty gallons; and they had already fulfilled their purpose. They did not hold the drinking water, but, as we are expressly told, were used for the Jewish rites of purification. As the guests had entered, water drawn from those jars had been poured over their hands and feet, according to Eastern custom, where the sand and heat and perspiration demand the frequent application of refreshing water. Probably by this time they were nearly empty, and it would be no small labour to draw sufficient water from some neighbouring well or spring. The men also were needed to attend on the guests. To-morrow would surely be time enough to fill these capacious jars in anticipation of the fresh relay of visitors!

There was no hesitation, however. Mary had already instructed them to do whatever Jesus might command; and at once leaving all else, these willing hearts and hands were soon engaged in their somewhat arduous toil. It was no half-hearted service, for we learn that they filled them up "*to the brim.*" So full were they that if a chance leaf, driven by the breeze, had alighted on the brimming contents of one of those great jars of water, it would have overflowed and spilt a few drops on the floor.

Let us notice here: (1) The necessity of obeying exactly and immediately the commands of that "inner voice," which may always be recognised by two signs: It never asks questions, but is always

direct and explicit ; and it generally asks for an obedience which is against, or above, what we by nature feel disposed to give. It is the Voice of the Spirit of God ! Whatsoever He saith unto you, Do it ! Not yours to question why ; not yours to make reply. He who responds, obeys, co-operates, and allows this Christ-light to have full sway in him, becomes transformed thereby, and recreated into the likeness of Christ.

(2) Whenever you do anything for Jesus, do it up to the brimful measure. It may be a very small thing—to take a class of poor children ; to pay a visit to a dying man or woman ; to write a letter—but let the response be always brimful. The jar is your opportunity ! A very common jar ! The act may seem unnecessary and inconvenient ; but out of it will probably arise the greatest achievement of your Christian service. When Jesus and you have entered into co-partnership, be sure that you do your bit with all your heart and might. Let there be nothing lacking on your side. It is an amazing thing that the Lord of Glory should want our help, and honour us by making us His fellow-workers. Let us show ourselves worthy of His trust !

(3) We are told that “the servants who drew the water knew.” The emphatic reference here laid on their drawing water throws light on this whole miracle. They drew *water* from the brimming jars, but as they crossed the passage to the tables where the guests reclined, they saw it flush into

wine. But only *they* knew when the miracle took place. When we work with Christ, we get to understand His methods; He unfolds to us His secrets. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He shows them His covenant. We, the servants, know many things hidden from the wise and prudent!

Many of us realise that this miracle is constantly taking place. We spend a week thinking out and preparing an address. We fill the water-pots to the brim. But at the end of days of preparation, we look sadly on what we have done, and say to ourselves: "After all, it is very poor stuff, *only water*." Yet, when we are speaking, and see faces suffused with emotion, here radiance, there repentance not to be repented of, we know that the Master has been collaborating with us, and has turned the water into wine. In that change, was there not a subtle reference to a thought afterwards elaborated by the Apostle: "This is He who came by water and blood, not by water only."

"Measure thy life by loss instead of gain,
Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured
forth;

For Love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice,
And whoso suffers most hath most to give."

"How poor were earth, if all its Martyrdoms,
If all its struggling sighs of sacrifice
Were swept away, and all were satiate!"

It is a beautiful privilege to work along with Christ,

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but we shall not serve that blessed apprenticeship without learning this lesson, that He has no pleasure in service rendered to Himself or to others, that does not cost us blood. This trace of blood in our actions is a matter we can never talk about. When it is being shed, we must anoint our heads and wash our faces, that men may have no inkling of what is happening. Neither the right hand nor the left must know or divulge the secret. When our Lord was performing this miracle, there was no strain or effort, no wrinkle on His forehead, no cloud upon His face. He drew no attention to Himself ; needed no thanks, and stole away unrecognised, at least for the moment, as the Giver. Of course there is no merit in sacrifice, which adds joy to the marriage feasts of our friends and beneficiaries, any more than in a hair shirt worn next the skin. The Master knows, and you know ; and you know that He knows ! A smile has passed between Him and you, and it is enough. Probably He will give you larger and wider opportunities as the days run on. Blessed are they that help to save weddings from disgrace, and little children from sorrow, because they have learnt in the school of Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

VI

It was His glory to show the ascending scale of God's gifts. The devil ever gives his best first ;

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and when the appetite is somewhat palled, he puts on his worse, even to the worst. Gold at the crown, clay at the foot. Feasting with harlots, then famine with swine. Goshen with its pastures, followed by Egypt with its fetters. Those who are living a heartless and worldly life must make the most of it, for it is the best they will ever have. After you have "well drunk," there will come coarser tastes, more depraved appetites. That which has satisfied will fail to satisfy, and in its stead will come forms of sin and temptation from which at the first you would have started back, saying, "Do you take me for a dog, that I should ever come to this!"

But the Master, on the other hand, is always giving something better. As the taste is being constantly refined, it is provided with more delicate and ravishing delights. That which you know of Him to-day is certainly better than that which you tasted when first you sat down at His board. And so it will ever be. The angels, as His servants, have orders to bring in and set before the heirs of glory things which eye hath not seen, and man's heart has not conceived, but which are all prepared. The best of earth will be far below the simplest fare of heaven. But what will heaven's best be? If the wine in the peasant's house is so luscious, what will be the new wine in the Father's Kingdom? What may we not expect from the vintage of the celestial hills! What will it be to sit at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, not as guests, but as the Bride! Oh, hasten on, ye slow-moving days; be quick to

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depart, that we may taste that ravishment of bliss !
But for ever and ever, as fresh revelations and
wonder break on our glad souls, we shall look up to
the Master of the Feast, and cry, “ *Thou hast kept
the best until now.* ”

REV. R. C. GILLIE, D.C.L.

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THE SPEARPOINTS IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

REV. ROBERT CALDER GILLIE, D.C.L.

“ He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me ; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” Matthew x, 37-39.

THERE is no denying that there are spearpoints in the teaching of Jesus. Hard sayings, severe demands, mingle with His tender promises and words of compassion. Something inexorable mingles strangely with something endlessly considerate. And part of my business is to bring you up against these spearpoints. I could not have a quiet conscience and you could only have contempt for me if I failed in this part of my duty, though both you and I may tremble a little while I do it. But the first thing is to understand what the spearpoints of the requirements of Jesus really are. It is very easy to misconceive them.

From time to time novelists and dramatists present to us characters who according to them really follow out Jesus' teaching and copy His

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example. What they often suggest is that it is impossible to be a first-grade Christian without breaking with the ordinary relations of life and forsaking the ordinary intercourse of the family ; that such a Christian will inevitably be a martyr and must be a hero. One thinks of the phrase of Edna Lyall, a forgotten novelist, " to live the life of the Crucified " ; of Sir Hall Caine's " The Master Christian," and now of the new play, " The Fool," which represents a clergyman seeking wholly to honour Christ and becoming thereby what most people would call an impossible person. I am afraid there is a good deal of melodrama, rather than true tragedy, in most delineations of this kind. The chief character is apt to be a stupid fool rather than a holy fool. One great writer, the Russian Dostoieffsky, has written a book on this theme which is wholly worthy. His novel, " The Idiot," I can strongly recommend. It is a pity that people should spend their time on melodramatic versions of this theme when a work of genius lies to their hand.

But such books, whether well-conceived or ill-conceived, do serve to remind us of the sharp edge of the demands of Jesus. It is important that we should study them. There is a permanently disquieted conscience in some Christians because they feel they have never done justice to them and have been tempted to avoid them. Besides, there are a good many outsiders who feel that what is required is quite beyond them. They say : " It is too hard for me. Of course, to be a real Christian and live

a life like the life of Jesus, that would be a wonderful and beautiful thing, but who does?" They are too often content to leave it at that. And there are others, both Christian and un-Christian, who think that there are first-grade Christians and second-grade Christians, and that it is impossible to be a first-grade Christian unless one accepts certain conditions of self-renunciation, such as, let us say, the unmarried life, voluntary poverty, and so forth. Now is that so? As honest men and women, let us know the facts. Let us try and clear up the situation.

I

The first thing to make clear to ourselves is that our Lord did call certain people to special sacrifices, special sufferings and, be it added, to special joys because of the service that involved such special sacrifices and sufferings. He called His Apostles to give up their nets and their boats, or their custom-house accounts and tolls. He told a rich young aristocrat to give all his fortune to the poor and to cast in his lot with Himself. He indicated quite clearly that certain people could serve Him and their generation best by remaining unmarried.

Something corresponding to these special commands must exist to-day, must be relevant for some of Christ's people in the world to-day. There is such a thing as an unusual vocation to spiritual

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service and testimony. Woe betide the man or woman who hears such a call and refuses it. Blessed is the man who discerns and obeys it.

All through the Christian centuries men have accepted such vocations. The Church would have withered long ago had it not been so. And followers of St. Martin and St. Francis, of John Knox and George Fox are still to be found, though the inward drama of their souls is often undiscovered because their visible self-renunciation is undramatic. There are ministers in our churches who have sacrificed college fellowships, lucrative directorships in prosperous companies, comfortable posts in the Civil Service, to undergo the arduous training and to receive the limited stipends and to anticipate the meagre pensions which are the best that unendowed churches can provide. They count the world well lost. They too have known the heavenly vision and have obeyed it. There will always be men and women to hear such a call to the home ministry or to the mission field or to some kind of public service, ill-remunerated but important. If you have but a suspicion that such a call is in your ear, consider it most seriously, for God speaks in whispers, scarcely to be heard, as well as in thunderclaps. Count yourself honoured if you know you ought to obey it. You will be among God's elect, elect to special service as surely as the Apostles.

But the question I wish to press is this. Supposing that many of you are without such a call to special spiritual service, are you therefore condemned to a

second-grade Christian life? Or to put it still more sharply, supposing you were once conscious of a vocation to special service, and accepted it and in due time felt compelled to resign it for some reason which seemed good to you, such as ill-health, or the claims of those unexpectedly dependent on you, or a fresh revelation of your powers, are you therefore condemned to a second-grade Christian life?

The answer is quite decisively "No." The grounds for this statement are widespread in the Gospels, but perhaps the clearest statement is found in the discussion concerning marriage. When the disciples heard our Lord's statement concerning the inviolableness of marriage save for one reason, with a dismal pessimism which throws a shadow on the habitual married life of that time they answered, "If that's a man's position with his wife, there is no good in marrying." Our Lord's rejoinder is notable: "True, but this truth is not practicable for everyone; it is only for those who have the gift. Some are eunuchs from birth, some have been made eunuchs by men, and some have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Realm of Heaven. Let anyone practise it for whom it is practicable."

Let me translate this into modern speech. "Some are called to a greatly simplified and concentrated life. They are called to a heroic short cut. If this is practicable for you, take that way." But He refuses to say that he who thus simplifies his life is therefore in a class by himself. Rather He insists

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that there is an ideal for marriage which must be pursued by all married people. He refuses to commit Himself to the proposition that the unmarried are necessarily in a higher state. There is nothing in His teaching to suggest it.

We see our way on the first point then. Some are called to special service and special conditions of life, to a narrowing and a concentration of their powers. But others who are not so called are neither condemned to a lower state nor released from the compulsion to seek the highest kind of life along the lines on which they choose to live or are compelled to live.

II

A second point is equally clear. All Christ's people are to be prepared for sacrifice and for the utmost sacrifice for the truth they know and for the Lord they love. Mark what I say. They are to be prepared for it. Their innermost loyalty, their deepest devotion, is to be their loyalty and their devotion to Him, which is just the same as saying loyalty and devotion to truth and to fulness of life and to goodness. He does say explicitly that nothing is comparable, in force of demand, to this compulsion. You must be prepared for limitation, yes, for what can only be called mutilation, for this fidelity. You must place this claim higher than any conceivable earthly claim. You must be pre-

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pared for death itself rather than resign this which alone makes life essentially precious. You may not be called to be a martyr, but you are to pray to be fit to be a martyr. You may not be called to be obviously a hero, but you are to strive to develop the heroic quality. The time may come when everything else must go that this may remain.

I think it is easy to instance how this works. A Christian girl must be prepared to forego marriage if marriage would forbid her remaining avowedly Christian. A business man must be prepared to forego gain and endure loss rather than be dishonest. A youth must be prepared to lose his situation rather than deny his conscience. A minister must be prepared to forfeit his position rather than conceal the truth he knows. A politician must be prepared to sacrifice his career rather than desert his principles.

Our Lord bids us face the possibility and count the cost of the high prize of His approving love. The cost may be the loss of the human splendours, the loss of much dear earthly delight, the loss of livelihood. We must be prepared for the greatest demand, for the worst trial.

That is a hard saying, and I don't say it lightly. In that sense every Christian is called on "to live dangerously." In that sense every Christian is a potential martyr, an embryo hero.

That being clear, let me say with equal strength that our Lord nowhere teaches that such a trial, even unto death, is the inevitable consequence of

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discipleship. His words are, "Let him that would follow Me take up his cross," not "Let him that would follow Me die on the cross." To carry the cross means that one is prepared for crucifixion, *if crucifixion be demanded*. There is another sense in which Paul uses this metaphor, viz. that all that is bad in us, all that is against Jesus, is to be put to death, and that we will get the strength thus to crucify our earthly longings and lusts by the love which He from His cross creates. But our Lord is not using the metaphor in that sense. What He demands is preparedness for death for His sake : that and no more.

Think of His own life and this will grow clear. He was not "living the life of the crucified" all the three years of His ministry. His first year was a year of a great deal of sunshine. He pictured Himself and His comrades as a bridal party. He comforted and healed and helped many people. He did His utmost to prepare people for His message. He never ran upon the spearpoints of opposition. When His Apostles went forth as His heralds, He bade them leave the place that rejected them, leave with a solemn warning but still leave, neither inviting nor resisting opposition. When they were tired out He invited them to come apart and rest awhile. He Himself never refused the simple provisions and alleviations of life when they could be accepted without compromising His mission. You remember how He was accused of being a glutton and a wine-bibber because He was not an ascetic

like John. You remember, too, His resting-times in that dear home in Bethany, and how simply He cast Himself down and slept when tired out, though His disciples had to toil at the oar. His sacrifices were never needless sacrifices, blundering sacrifices. Both His own sacrificial life and the sacrificial life He demanded were distinguished by that "fine sanity" of which Strauss, the arch-heretic of a past century, spoke. He never asked needless, meaningless asceticism. He never advocated pain for pain's sake. He was not afraid to live a day without open sacrifice. He never taught that we had no right to be happy unless we were sacrificing something every day.

My complaint against certain novelists and dramatists lies here. They are so anxious to make their effect that they do less than justice to the sanity which Jesus possessed, and to the sanity which He taught when He said, "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." It is a misrepresentation of the life and teaching of Jesus to suggest that all the time and all the way a faithful follower of His must expect only to walk on sword-blades and to be crowned with thorns and to be voted an impossible person.

What Jesus demands is far-reaching enough, tremendous enough—I venture the word, terrible enough—without its being misrepresented.

A full confirmation of what I am saying is found in the lives of His first Apostles. They did endure hardship, many of them died a martyr's death;

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but what friendships they enjoyed, what alleviations they possessed. Peter in the home of Mark's mother, Paul under Lydia's kindly roof at Philippi! And all the encircling fellowships of the brotherhood, were God's mercies to them as they told His good news in a pagan world.

By all means let us take to heart, with bared breast, our Lord's words, "He that loveth father and mother, son and daughter, more than Me, is not worthy of Me," but let us remember also His amazing promise: "Everyone that hath left houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for My name's sake shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit eternal life." "Shall receive a hundredfold." "Shall receive a hundredfold." Yes, there are spearpoints in the words of Jesus, but the spears are garlanded with roses, and there are medicaments for the wounds they make.

III

I have been trying to present fairly our Lord's demands. But I tremble lest I should misrepresent them and lure you from the path with a false hope of ease or somehow cheat you into the unheroic life. I have been pointing out that we are not called to live the life of the crucified but to live the life prepared for a sudden demand for crucifixion. I have been emphasising that the butcher and the banker, the wife and the schoolmistress, may be

as truly dedicated souls as the minister and the missionary. But these treacherous hearts of ours, they are so easily tempted to evade the greatest demand when it comes. Remember, therefore, "the terrible thoroughness" of Jesus Christ. Do you recognise that phrase? It occurred in an obituary notice of F. H. Bradley, perhaps the greatest of our modern English philosophers, and refers to the implacable demands of his intellect in the search for truth.

They exactly describe the nature of our Lord's demand—"terrible thoroughness." We cannot persuade Him to call the wrong way the right way or the partially right way. We cannot retain His fellowship, which is the dew on the grass, the sunlight on the dew, unless we walk His way. We cannot walk the lower path, when called to the higher, without a cloud rising between Him and us. He demands, He insists, that we seek the highest; He is inexorable, implacable, there.

I do not know where you stand to-day, at what parting of the ways in your life; I cannot know if there is anyone called to a mighty act of faith or an unlooked-for act of sacrifice. All I know is that it is impossible to deceive Him, impossible to change His demand, impossible to be one with Him in feeling and to be opposed to Him in will. I charge you, remember the "terrible thoroughness" of Jesus Christ, like the thoroughness of the true surgeon who will cut away the last fragment of diseased flesh but does it for the sake of life. How

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do I dare to say these things to you and to myself ? How can I hope to draw men and women to His side, or to hold you steadfast when this is my message ?

I have but one hope—Himself. If you and I can but catch one fleeting vision of Him, undeviating in His love for us ; if we can gain one fresh glimpse of Him enduring the Cross for us, it will be enough to nerve us to meet the spearpoints of life, which are as sure as the spearpoints of His teaching. His own certainty helps us. Jesus was sure that there was that in Him which can remake manhood, changing the coward into the hero and the recreant into the loyalist. Jesus knew that His love can be stronger than every allurements and every menace of earth. There was something in Him communicable to everyone who surrendered to Him. He knew Himself to be the Lifegiver, the bestower of heavenly reinforcement, such as no fountain of power could either contribute or withstand. He knew better than we do how much He was asking. But He dared to ask because He knew how much He had to give.

Daring ? Of course He was daring with the boldness of great love. Revolutionary ? Yes, if you mean inward revolution, the revolution made by victorious love. No, if you mean outward revolution, which He not only did not initiate but also carefully avoided. Folly ? Ah, that depends upon your judgment, whether the human splendours or His approval be most worth while.

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THE GARDEN AND THE CROSS

REV. JOHN KELMAN, D.D., D.Litt., O.B.E.

The Garden and the Cross.

Matthew xxvii, 59-60 ; John xix, 41.

VERY little is known about Joseph of Arimathea. He was a counsellor, both rich and influential, and either he had settled in Jerusalem, emigrating from the village of Arimathea, or perhaps he may have retained his Arimathean home, while he had purchased for himself a city garden in which he had made his tomb. In any case he seems to have been a man of refined and gentle tastes, to whom a garden was a precious thing. He had been impressed by Jesus, but it was characteristic of his disposition that he had not come out into the open, but had lived as a secret disciple and supporter of the Master. We read that he had not consented unto the deed of the others, and very probably he had been absent from the trial where all seem to have been at one in their verdict of condemnation. After Jesus had died he came forward with those tender ministries which culminated in the burial described in the text.

Curiously he appears as a great figure in the later Arthurian romances. We read of him in stories of the Holy Grail, connected with an establishment at

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Glastonbury, and in the year A.D. 63 we find him building the first British oratory with twisted twigs on an island in the River Brue. These legends show how deeply he had impressed the imagination of our fathers and how much he had endeared himself to their hearts.

I

First of all let us tell to ourselves again the beautiful story. It begins with Joseph and his garden. The garden is a characteristic feature of the Holy Land. "Many a sweet vista in Palestine is seen framed in trellised vines, or in passion-flower swinging over a roofed fountain or a garden house." Men planted orchards and enclosed them with a wall or a thorn hedge. They irrigated them artificially, or diverted streams towards them, so that those who approached along the dusty highway were refreshed even in passing with the sound of falling or of running water. Some of these gardens have become famous from their magnificence and their beauty. Such were the King's Gardens near the Pool of Siloam, wonderful gardens of roses and of spices. But many a private man had his little plot of land where he spent his leisure time among flowers of his own cultivating, and shady trees under which he found retirement and solitude. When Titus was besieging Jerusalem it was among garden trenches outside the walls that

on one occasion he was nearly captured by the Jews.

These garden solitudes meant much to Israel. The life of Palestine was all lived in the open, and the publicity of it must sometimes have been very wearing to the nerves and trying to the strength of men. Houses were built so as to give the appearance of aggressive ruinousness, and past the blind walls of these the screaming streets zigzagged through cities and villages. But the apparent ruin was often a very gorgeous little palace, opening with all its windows upon a garden, where nature's voice might be heard continually calling, *Come unto me and I will give you rest*. The reason for this curious habit of architecture has of late centuries been largely the rapacity of the tax-collector. But it has deeper roots than that, and somehow fits exactly with the Oriental nature. There is something which makes a secret place congenial to the Eastern. The *genii* of the desert derived their name from the same root as the word for garden, and the garden city of *Jenin* obviously bears the same origin. The violent contrast between these sweet retreats and the noise and bustle of life outside their walls made them veritable paradises to the imagination of men and women. They were the favourite spots for meditation and for prayer. In them the family held its gatherings. Lights were swung in the darkness among the green branches of the trees and the sound of music and laughter was wafted out from such secluded

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places to arouse a wistful moment of envy in the heart of those who passed by. Thus religion and romance combined in the idea of the *hortus conclusus* (the garden enclosed), so sweetly sung in the Song of Solomon. It is significant that the *Paradise*, alike of Jews, Mohammedans and Christians, has always been conceived of as a garden.

So far then, one might naturally think of Joseph as being "a good easy man," a man somewhat luxurious in his tastes, and bent upon enjoying the full beauty of life. There was, however, a tomb in Joseph's garden. This might give the impression that we had been mistaken in conceiving the garden as a voluptuous thing, and might lead us to imagine that it was but an enclosure with which a melancholy person, prone to thinking upon death, had surrounded his tomb. As a matter of fact, while the presence of the tomb does indeed show us Joseph to have been a serious and thoughtful man, it by no means takes away the sense of luxuriousness from the garden. Indeed, the tomb is the last word of luxury in such a case, and the mystic dreaming which centres around a man's own grave may become to an imaginative nature an extremely voluptuous experience. It is in this way that a cultivated mind may bid defiance to mortality and make even death the minister of his pleasures. The tomb is sombre but there is no necessary harshness in its presence here. He will play with the spectre for a little time now and then and find the sun shining all the brighter when he returns

to the world, with the comfortable assurance that, after all, he is not dead yet.

Little did Joseph think, while he planned and walked in his garden under the sweet and fragrant shade of trees, of the strange shadow that would one day fall across it. For many a day and year he had watched his plants growing, until the saplings cast longer and heavier shadows, dappling the lily-sprinkled ground. But one day there arose upon the hill just beyond his wall a savage, strange and uncouth thing, shapeless, horrible and suggestive, that changed everything. The garden could never be the same again, nor could Joseph. We ask ourselves how much he knew of Calvary, and it is probable enough that he knew everything, and that in despair of any help he had absented himself from the scene of the trial. Yet when the cross actually arose and its shadow was flung upon his pleasure, not only was the garden changed: the touch of the cross upon it changed Joseph also. It shamed him out of all his associations and cut him off from everything he had held dear. It turned for him the glory of the Jewish world to ashes, and it made of him a new man, definitely and heroically Christian.

That wheeling shadow did more than touch the garden with its magic spell. The cross stood like the index of some ghastly dial, and we see from Calvary its black image sweeping round the world. Ah, that mighty cross! What power it has to change all that it touches! Its power was felt by

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the guilty Jewish world and the faded world of the Greek. It penetrated below the surface prejudices of the nations and quenched the evil lights that lit their treacherous depths. Joseph was not the only dreamer whom that day brought to face reality. In richer and more tragic meaning the shadow of the cross fell upon all earth's gardens, swept round the world of man's ambitions and his sins, and quenched the very flames of hell within innumerable souls.

Think of Joseph walking on that day in his garden—that hideous day. He hears all that is transacted on the hill above him, the noise and tumult and the strident cries of men whose throats are dry with the dust of the execution-ground. He hears the hammering of nails and all that follows it, to the very death-cry of Jesus that rends the air. Then, when all is over, the garden is so changed for Joseph that there is but one possible use for it. While Jesus was alive Joseph had hung back from Him, feeling perhaps that He had power enough to defend Himself. But now, when He has been left to the mercy of men and has not exercised His power, the responsibility for all that is left of Him falls upon His friend. Criminals were buried at sunset, their bodies thrown into the pit beside the cross: there shall be no sunset malefactor's pit for Jesus. The new tomb and its use are obvious. He must come here. So Jesus came to Joseph, dead—Jesus, who might have come to him living, had Joseph willed it so. A strange

guest indeed, coming to the garden tomb ; though the cross had touched it and the ground was sprinkled now with sweet spices of burial before its time. *There laid they Jesus*, and this was His homecoming from His enemies to His friends. This was Jesus' way of entering Joseph's garden. Did Joseph himself, we wonder, lie afterwards in that tomb, sharing with Jesus the dreadful realism of the grave ? We cannot tell. At least on that day Jesus was his guest.

“ Rest weary Son of God ; Thy work is done
And all Thy burdens borne ;
Rest on that stone, till the third sun has brought
Thine everlasting morn.”

Touched by that shadow of the cross, Joseph's garden blossomed into flowers in the spring-time. But there were new and strange flowers growing there now beyond all the beauty of former days. In that new tomb there was planted the seed of human immortality and eternal life. Among those flower-beds there sprang up the plant of a love that death cannot kill, whose seedlings have been transplanted far and wide and are now growing in every land. Thus, when next we read of it, there are angels in the garden, and a woman longing for a departed friend. Finding Jesus, she falls upon the ground and clasps His feet, giving herself to Him in tenderest abandonment. “ Mary.” “ Rabboni.” It is the shortest dialogue recorded upon earth, and in it is the utter self-surrender of mankind and the

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eternal acceptance of God. We are told that she had supposed Him to be the gardener, and she was not wrong in that supposition: for He is the Lord of that garden and all others—Lord of the garden of the souls of men and women, Who henceforth shall plant in them the seeds of all good things. And with His entrance the secluding gates were broken and flung aside forever. The garden that had been so secret became now a hospitable place, free for the entrance of the glory of heaven and the outgoing of human love so long as time shall last.

II

Now let us see what all this means for our own life and its experience. It is an old and very beautiful story, but like other such tales it is strangely "applicable yet." All through the ages men and women have found that "a garden is a lovesome thing, God wot," and the garden idea is worth considering in this connection. English literature is singularly rich in it and many of our most beautiful essays and poems show what it has meant to our shy and reticent race. "God Almighty first planted a garden," says Bacon, "and indeed it is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of men; without which buildings and palaces are but gross handiworks." Robert Louis Stevenson in a well-known sentence has reminded us that "it is a shaggy world, and yet studded with gardens;

where the salt and tumbling sea receives rivers running from among reeds and lilies." No reference of them all, perhaps, is more satisfying than Mrs. Florence McCunn's words in which she tells us, "Time, which makes our politics obsolete, only makes our gardens old-fashioned." Through all the centuries the literature of gardens has been a thing by itself, and with all its great beauty it has stood for a selfish element in art and letters. The aristocratic spirit, that delights in exquisite things, wards off the vulgar crowd and retires to its cultivated retreat with a fastidious relief. From that secluded garden of the "Decameron," sleeping among its cypresses at Fiesole, down to those dainty enclosures which still breathe the fragrance of bygone ages in the precincts of great houses in England and in France, the garden has been the most deliberate of luxuries. It has stood for a private place in which the spirit lingers among the things it loves most dearly. It is an enclosure beautiful and fresh, a place set apart from the daily toil, relaxed from strenuousness of any kind. Labour should know its limits, and this is luxury that lies beyond them.

Much as we admire and delight in this sweet and pleasant heritage that comes to us from the poetic and luxurious past, conscience cannot be content with it, as a final ideal for the pleasures of life. The garden can no longer be regarded as an insignificant place of mere rest and refreshment. It is a more important factor in man's spiritual development

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than either the battlefield or the market-place. It may be a place of secret idolatry, corrupting the very souls of those that walk in it. It may be a place of mere self-indulgence, hindering the spirit of man and detaining it on its arduous way—a standing temptation to its lingerers to stay too long aloof from the toilsome and painful world outside. But a change has come of late years upon the idea of the garden. In former times it was a thing possible only to the rich. To-day all the world is preparing gardens for the poor. Nothing is more typical of the swivelling round of conscience from one set of virtues and vices to another, than the change in all nations which has made the old complacency no longer possible. Whenever men to-day begin to shut themselves in exclusively for the purpose of enjoying the good things of this life, the insistent cry of the world's poverty and misery condemns them in the consciences of all worthy citizens. Indeed that cry penetrates to their own conscience, and will not let them rest. The social battle has, as Mr. Benjamin Kidd has told us, been won in the consciences of the wealthy and the powerful, and it is there that it will always gain its victories. The garden of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is no longer a possible ideal. It has been supplanted by the cottage garden of the country, and the children's play-gardens which are now an institution even in the poorest slums of the city.

There is no more patent and significant testimony

to the power of the cross than this. The shadow of the cross has changed the gardens of the world. The sense of the world's pain and suffering has abolished the old and created the new social conscience: and, in the main issues of our social life, the victory of the cross is already won in the consciences of the powerful.

The garden idea is also applicable to our individual lives. We all know many beautiful spirits, the most charming of all our friends, who give us the sense of a race of aristocrats of the soul. They inhabit withdrawn and secret places. Theirs is the *garden enclosed, the fountain sealed*, and they linger where the dew of herbs is laden with fragrance under morning and evening light. Theirs is the garden of thought. Their mind dwells among choice books whose literary beauties never wither, though the roots of those trees of knowledge may have been planted centuries ago. Theirs too is the garden of the heart, and they are delicately sensitive to the finest shades and possibilities of emotion. All these are secret and reticent things, flying sentiments that shrink from the touch of any but initiated finger-tips. They are the Diana of the garden, continually eluding the huntsman in thickets of the glade. Others there are whose garden is that of the home, shutting in a little company of dearest friends. Few guests are there, for the gates are jealously guarded and the general public passes on its way, left to mind its own business, and to express its joy and heal its sorrow for itself. Within

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the sacred pale of home there is the tender luxury of motherhood and fatherhood, the joy in children and the children's joy in life and love. But it is an essentially exclusive precinct, apt to grudge any share that the homeless may beg of it. There is also the garden of our sorrows, where each new tomb is hewn out of the living rock of life. When grief comes to us we shrink back from all consolations of friends. We shall not admit even our dearest to share our tears with us. Our sorrow is our own and let men keep their hands from it: as though the touch of any communication seemed to profane the austere luxury of grief.

So there are many singers and mourners upon garden-seats, who still for one reason or another stay aloof from the general, shut themselves in and let the world go by. These are sweet places of imagination and of dream, of desire and regret, and to a certain extent they are excellently good places. They keep our finest heritage of the inner life from profane and common handling. They tell us of the infinite value of reticence as a preserver of tender and elusive things. We may well thank God for those gardens enclosed, and for every cool retreat in a world whose literature and whose life alike are grown so vociferous and so promiscuous as those of to-day.

Yet upon even our sweetest gardens there must inevitably fall one day the shadow of the cross. Sooner or later, but quite surely some time, it will invade them. I do not mean merely that the

dreamer of delicate dreams will have to include in his imagination the pathetic yet half-pleasant tomb, saying to himself, *I shall die*. I mean that the shadow of the real cross will come upon them, grim, and gaunt, and searching.

“Thy straight long beam lies steady on the cross.

Ah me !

What secret would thy radiant finger show ?
Of thy bright mastership is this the key ?
Is this thy secret then and is it woe ?

“Even so, oh cross ! thine is the victory :

Thy roots are fast within our fairest fields.
Brightness may emanate in heaven from thee :
Here thy dread symbol only shadow yields.”

In horror we watch the shades of death taking possession of our garden, and imparting to our lives the peculiar quality of pain and sacrifice. We think that all is over with the sweet fragrance of olden days, that never more again shall we know the fascinating charm of the earth. It may be so. To some extent it is so, doubtless. Yet the change is surely for the better. The touch of some great sorrow or sacrifice which life has demanded of us may change the sheltered coward into a brave man who bears his heart exposed and unprotected in the open. It may change also the world of a man's ideals until he will be henceforth ashamed of mere selfish delight, however artistic, and will be constrained to respond to the demand for assuagement

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of the world's sorrow and pain. Christ comes to all our gardens thus, invading and claiming them. He brings love, and the open generous heart that tears down the gates of their exclusiveness and insists that we shall share our best with the disinherited. His coming is like the change that we have seen from the gardens of the rich to the gardens of the poor, which has abolished the complacency of ancient days and established the social conscience in society. So for us, each one according to his experience, shall Christ replace our demand for selfish enjoyment with His greater ideals of sacrifice and redemption. We shall still have our secret places, nor will His presence banish any of the fairest elements of life; but we shall no longer take up an attitude of spiritual selfishness towards any part of the outer world, seeking rather to share whatever gifts the garden may have brought us, with those whose poverty of spirit needs such gifts.

Further, there is still the new tomb in the garden. As we have seen, from the moment when the shadow of the cross had touched the garden of Joseph, there was nothing for it but to let Jesus in, dead or living. So when His cross has touched our lives and we have felt, either in the understanding of His suffering or in the experience of our own, something of the divine meaning of sorrow and of pain, Christ comes to our gardens. We must let Him in. And after this coming of His, the place will never be the same again. For us as for Joseph it is the shadow of the cross that brings light and changes

the tomb that once was there into the promise and portal of a glorious life. In all the gardens of our thought and feeling there is indeed the inevitable tomb, and our sense of death is naturally chill and dread. That is but human nature. But now the tomb is changed from the shadow of death to the resting-place of Jesus, and the ground of His resurrection. In the ideal of sacrifice and the willing acceptance of the cross many of us have taken the dead Christ into our garden; and lo, a miracle! The living Christ is walking with us there. He has not only brought love for the dead and the perfume of sweet spices rendering an ancient memory fragrant. Not only has He transformed the sacrifices of life into a new revelation of love. He has filled our hearts with hope and promise for the future day. Our shadowed secret places, from which the old selfish luxuriousness has departed at the entrance of sorrow or of death—these may become for us also scenes of resurrection. We have taken the dead Christ to our hearts and shall find Him living. We have revered His tomb and we shall see His rising.

Thus all the beauty of art and the tenderness of love need to be touched with the shadow of the cross before they can perfectly fulfil themselves. But touched with that shadow the garden of the soul becomes a place of resurrection where Christ will walk henceforward in all the transfigured beauty of His eternal life. We do not suppose Him to be the Gardener of our souls. We know Him

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to be the Master of the garden. He shall command and enhance its freshness and its growth. When the night falls and we enter into our own new tomb we shall find it sweet with the fragrance of His spices. Then when we awake it shall be in the fields of the blessed, the eternal gardens of the Lord. There we shall see Him once again, walking in the sunlight, and He shall call us by our name, and we shall answer as we did on earth, "My Master."

THE REV. HERBERT H. FARMER, M.A.

REV. HERBERT H. FARMER, M.A.

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CHRIST AND THE SICKNESS OF HUMANITY

REV. HERBERT H. FARMER, M.A.

"Just as one man's disobedience made all the rest sinners, so one man's obedience will make all the rest righteous." (Moffatt's translation.)

Romans v, 19.

AT first reading the second half of this chapter seems to strike a note of unreality. Up to verse 11 the Apostle has been speaking with warm enthusiasm about the great work of redemption wrought for mankind by Jesus Christ. At verse 12 this seems to change; from being religious and experiential the Apostle passes, apparently, to being merely speculative, almost rabbinical. The idea strikes him that there is a parallelism between the relation of Adam to the human race in respect of sin and the relation of Jesus to it in respect of the remedy of sin, and he forthwith proceeds to work out the idea in detail, setting forth many points of similarity and contrast between the two relationships. Reading the passage quickly it is difficult to resist the impression that Paul was here indulging, somewhat uncritically, an exuberant outburst of intellectual association and metaphorical conceit. May we not pass it over as an example of an extinct

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homiletical method, a bygone scholasticism, cutting, as the modern slang is, no ice? It is interesting to compare Adam with Christ, but, after all, what does it amount to? The pith of the matter is in the first eleven verses.

It is very doubtful, however, whether there is a single passage in Paul's epistles where, when you get to the core of it, you find him saying something which does not matter even to the modern world. In this comparison of Christ with Adam it is possible to hold that the Apostle is still very closely in touch with facts, as closely in touch as in the first half of the chapter. To be sure, he falls into a somewhat rabbinical and dry way of expressing himself, but a man does not throw off all his mental habits when he becomes a Christian, and the important thing is what he has to say and not how he says it. The suggestion I have to make is that, having spoken in verses I to II of the great work Jesus did for mankind, the Apostle is now in these later verses trying to set forth a certain far-reaching fact of human life which lay behind that work and made it possible. This fact is so essential and ineradicable in human life that it does unite Adam and Jesus; incidentally and for the same reason, namely, that it is so essential, it is exceedingly difficult to express and to grasp in all its bearings. So far from Paul here merely indulging a play of metaphorical ideas, he is grappling with a reality, the terror and challenge of which had met him every day of his life alike in his own soul and in

his observation of men, a reality which is still, as it will always be, one of the most obtrusive things in human experience.

What is this reality? It is the terrific solidarity of the human race. Adam and Jesus, remote in time from one another, yet closely knit together in the one web of life! "As one man's trespass issued in doom for all, so one man's act of redress issues in acquittal and life for all. Just as one man's disobedience made all the rest sinners, so one man's obedience will make all the rest righteous." Adam, in other words, by virtue of the solidarity of mankind, did infinite harm to all through his sin; Jesus, by virtue of the same solidarity, did infinite good to all through his righteousness. Let not our minds be turned from the main truth by discussions about Adam and the Fall. Solidarity, at any rate, is a fact which we can all verify for ourselves. The Apostle's penetrating and inspired revelation to us here is in connecting with this fact the efficacy of Christ's life and death and, therefore, the whole reasonableness of the Gospel.

I

We cannot do better than to start with Adam, that is to say, with what Adam stands for as the type and symbol—sin. For people who are in any degree sensitive to life's problems and sorrows, it is in regard to sin that the close interlocking of

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human lives with one another is usually first vividly realised ; and the truth once seen soon ramifies into a matter of such magnitude that it is impossible not to be well-nigh overwhelmed by it. It is more than likely that this is how it first came home to Paul. He begins this same epistle to the Romans with one of the most powerful and sombre pictures in literature of the festering corruption of the pagan world of that time. The picture, in its total impression, is not of a collection of individual sinners, but of a society of sin ; a whole people lapsed ; sin, so to say, self-multiplying and infectious over the whole race. Paul too had known the problem of sin in his own heart. Whence came these evil passions which sprang up in his soul and defied all his efforts to control them ? He did not want them ; on the contrary, he hated them. They were alien intruders. They seemed to come in from the outside. Whence ? His conclusion seems to be that in part at any rate they have come in from the whole diseased condition of humanity of which he was, willy-nilly, an organic part, with which he was, as it were, consolidated. Within and without, sin implied, as part of its basis and power, the solidarity of the race.

It is the same, of course, to-day. No one can look at life steadily and seriously without being stung by the thought. It becomes clearer as one's experience of life widens. The overpowering, entrenched might of evil and the paralysing magnitude of the problem of redeeming it even in a

small section of human life are the immediate consequence of the close, organic solidarity of the race, of the fact that pressing in upon every individual cell of the body of humanity is the moral ill-health of the whole. This unity makes it impossible ever to isolate the problem to be dealt with. You find you cannot hope ever to restore Jones completely without first restoring a hundred other folk besides, to say nothing of reforming social systems which are mighty with tradition and hoary with age. Nobody has realised the magnitude of the problem of sin who has not understood that it is a vast illness of the whole vast organism of humanity. We may insist as much as we like that sin is a matter of individual responsibility ; but we must insist also, however difficult it may be to reconcile the two positions, that it is a matter of social determination and collective pressure, otherwise we take account of only half the facts.

At any popular seaside resort at the height of the season it is possible to contemplate this general debility of the race in an unusually concentrated light. At one such resort recently there was staged every night in the week to crowded and appreciative houses a piece which was one long succession of folly and indecency. You came out of the place feeling that you needed a spiritual bath. You came out and passed the big hotels with their ostentatious luxury, the crowded public-houses with the neglected children on the doorstep and the raucous jollity within. You traversed the slums,

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hideous, evil-smelling, filthy. You noted the shop windows, filled with silly novels and still sillier, if not pitifully indecent, postcards. You lingered by the pierrots and heard the "*double ententes*" with which insipid fare was spiced up for jaded tastes. You read the newspapers the next day with the reports of such of yesterday's immoralities as happened to offend the police. You pieced it all out with what you yourself knew of the ways of men and of your own heart—the general drabness and moral shoddiness of it all—and the total, irresistible impression was that mankind, as a whole and on the average, was in desperately low health.

And this was not a melancholy judgment born of a transient depression of spirits, nor was it the outcome of a superior self-complacency. One remembered every capacity of good that there is in men. One made every allowance. Indeed, it was just because there was so much allowance to be made that the problem of it all seemed so insoluble and its burden so unbearable. Behind all these facts there stretched away into the background the total illness of humanity considered as a whole—evil heredity ; poor, under-nourished physique ; a vile environment in childhood ; a meagre education ceasing before it has ever begun at the baby age of fourteen ; bad housing ; monotonous work ; suppressed instincts—and all the rest. One did not despise these people. One was in so many ways on a level, so very much in the same boat with them.

We were all poor specimens and none knew quite why. If we had any idea as to the reason we were impotent in face of it. And as the realisation of these things swept over the soul, the heart cried out almost involuntarily for an assurance of some sort that somewhere, at some time, something had been done, something was being done, which was equal to the magnitude of the problem, which was really making a difference and had the situation in hand. It was intolerable to contemplate the possibility that all we sick folk, sick together and infecting one another, might be incurable; yet plainly we were so if left to ourselves. One had a half-glimpse of what Jesus felt when the sight of the teeming multitudes of men wrung from Him the thought that they were sheep without a shepherd, lost sheep, trebly lost because they did not know they were lost, for ever lost unless someone bigger than them all took them in hand and did for them that which in the nature of the case they could not do for themselves.

Those who hope and believe that one day mankind will succeed in redeeming itself cannot have seen the problem for what it really is. It is like expecting a man to lift himself by his own waistband, and a rotten waistband at that. To be optimistic about sin it is necessary either deliberately to minimise its magnitude or to look elsewhere for its cure. The facts drive one to despair or to God. Here the Christian faith comes in. That faith is that God has the situation in hand and that, in

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particular, it was got in hand and the disease, so to say, checked in a way which ensures its ultimate defeat, through the life and death of Jesus Christ. Is this a tenable belief? The heart in its moments of clearest vision longs passionately that it might be true. Is there any evidence that it is true? There is—along the line the Apostle suggests in this passage.

II

I have said that the fact of the solidarity of mankind first obtrudes itself upon us in regard to sin. Our mistake is to think that it is confined to sin. The interlocking of life with life is to be found in every department of human experience, not least, probably, in those areas of our being which at present lie beyond our conscious experience. Scientists have shown that on the physical plane all life, including animal and vegetable life, is knit together in a single web of cause and effect; so that it is hardly any exaggeration to say that ultimately every organism depends upon every other organism for its well-being. It may at times have seemed to us a poetic hyperbole to say that a sparrow cannot perish without the Father knowing it, but it is sober, scientific fact that it cannot perish without the whole of animate nature knowing it. One sparrow might kill many insects, and insects affect crops, and crops affect the destinies

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of peoples. What is true on the lowest physical plane is hardly likely to be untrue on the plane of man's mind and spirit. There is much, indeed, to show that the unity is far closer there than elsewhere. Our minds run into one another in countless ways. Telepathy, sympathy, suggestion are facts. When we happen to notice one of these facts we are often amazed, yet what if the truth of the matter were that in everything, in a way which does not injure our personality, we are only a part of the single, total fact of humanity, just as the cells of the body are only part of the single total fact of the body? A biologist has recently said that this is so, and that in consequence the League of Nations is biologically inevitable, because we cannot for ever keep apart what God in the nature of things has joined together. The true unit of life is not Jones or Brown or Robinson; to regard them as isolated individuals is to see only half of them. The true unit is the human race, the racial organism in which all the individuals, at present very largely in an unconscious way, throb and palpitate together.

Now, if solidarity can be effective for evil, by the same argument it can be effective for good. If my neighbour can drag me down by his sin, may he not also drag me up by his virtue, nay, indeed, does he not, even though I know nothing about it? This seems to be precisely Paul's argument in this passage. "Just as one man's disobedience made all the rest sinners, so one man's obedience will

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make all the rest righteous." It is something gained to know in face of all the evil in the body of humanity that the same conditions which make evil strong also make good strong and give it the opportunity to redeem. The question then is, whether there is enough good in the body of humanity to make any real difference, to lift the sunken cells back into purity and health, or, at the least, to save them from irremedial dereliction and collapse. The Christian answer would seem to be that there is enough good, but only because of Jesus Christ. His perfect love, introduced right into the organism of humanity, has made a difference, a vital, everlasting difference, which is not the less real because the way of it we cannot at present completely understand.

It is our obsession with physical magnitudes which makes us fail to realise that the perfect love of Jesus is the most colossal and dynamic fact in the whole of terrestrial history. Can an earthquake happen and the whole earth not reverberate? Can a spiritual earthquake happen and the whole body of humanity, already throbbing in a single unity, not reverberate too? As the hymn says, "there was no other good enough." It is His goodness which counts. So, as I have thought of all the sin and degradation in human life and of its terrible disproportion to what is good, wonderful as the latter often is; as the overwhelming solid magnitude of evil has laid hold of me and the pitiable impotence of us who are involved in it

to help ourselves I have comforted myself with the thought, and dared to hope that it is not far from the reality of things, that *Christ has died*, that the power of perfect love is not merely in the Universe somewhere, but actually, through Christ's divine humanity, in the poor sick body of mankind of which I am a part.

There are those who will think these thoughts to be the merest speculation. Yet, after all, they are not far from the deepest intuitions of the Christian faith and, indeed, of the universal human heart. The pre-eminence which we give to love as the supreme redeeming thing in Christ, the necessity for an incarnation of the Spirit of love, the efficacy we attribute to prayer, the possibility of atonement, the need for us to love and to enter into the fellowship of suffering in order to redeem it—all these things bend together and become reasonable in the central fact, amply witnessed by everyday experience, that, whether we like it or not, we are all, sinners and saints together, members one of another. To be sure, no man can be fully restored without his own co-operation, but must we not believe in what the old theologians called *prevenient grace*, which, being translated into more human and understandable terms, means a love which in the first instance gets hold of men without their co-operation and sets their feet on the upward way. There are antinomies in life which we can never hope to reconcile. We must believe in freedom at all costs, yet, when we see

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a poor debauched, broken, disabled human life with, for the time being, no freedom left, we are driven to believe in a love which has still got him in its grasp and will not let him go. May it not be that in the profound penetration of the mood in which he wrote this chapter the Apostle saw something which we have missed and which made him say, meaning it in a sense more universal than our despondent hearts perhaps are ready to believe, "just as one man's disobedience made all the rest sinners, so one man's obedience will at some time or other make all the rest righteous?"

MAUDE ROYDEN.

AGNES MAUDE ROYDEN.

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MIDDLE-AGE

AGNES MAUDE ROYDEN

OUR LORD never reached middle-age, and I suppose that is, fundamentally, the reason why many people feel that middle-age is rather dreary. It is because so many of the finest spirits died when they were young; so often that it has become a proverb to say "Those whom the gods love die young." Our Lord Himself, who might have been thirty-three—who could not, I believe, have been more than thirty-five or thirty-six—when He died, gives to those who love Him an example and an inspiration at so many points of life, that to find that one cannot get from Him the kind of guidance that one would desire at middle-age makes us feel that it is better to be swept out of life before the process of growing old and losing the glamour and the glory of existence comes upon us.

What is middle-age? When do we begin to be middle-aged? For myself I can say that up to my present year I have found every year of my life more exciting than the year before, and the idea that there is something dreary and dull about middle-age—*necessarily* dreary and dull—seems to me fundamentally mistaken.

After all, when we reach the watershed of life,

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which divides the growing up from the descent, we ought to have learned a great deal about ourselves. It has been said that a man of forty who is not able to act as his own doctor must be a fool. I do not think that is altogether true, but there is something in it. He ought to know by that time, more or less, what physically agrees with him, what he can eat without having indigestion, and how much he can eat, what holidays he needs, and so on. And forty is hardly middle-aged. Surely, then, by the time we are approaching fifty we ought to know something about our own personality! We ought to know, roughly speaking, what kind of people we are.

Now one of the most harassing things about youth is our complete uncertainty as to what kind of a person we are. Whether one is very remarkable, extraordinarily good, or very commonplace, or very bad is all uncertain. Personally I never could be at all certain, and I believe I generally hoped that I was the kind of person that I had just read about in some book—if it was an attractive person, a great saint, or a great adventurer, or somebody who had excelled in some rôle of life! Or perhaps somebody whose life was one long act of self-sacrifice of which nobody would ever know until after I was dead. It was most harassing, this uncertainty, because although there is a certain natural conceit in young people (*it is* natural, and nobody ought to be irritated by it) there is also a recurring sense of inferiority. Are your opinions

yours, or have you simply accepted them from somebody else? Have your most cherished convictions been thrust upon you by somebody you specially admire, or by the circle in which you grew up, or by the tradition that was in your family? Those ideals in which you believe, are they really utterly foolish and unreal? Are they opinions which only very young and ignorant people could hold, or is there some truth in them? Perhaps before the world we put up a bluff of being absolutely certain—more certain than anyone ever could be!—and yet how often there comes into our minds a fear that perhaps we are only an empty shell with nothing really our own in it at all, and that neither our ideals, nor our principles, nor our convictions, nor even the virtues that the world ascribes to us, are really ours.

What kind of people are we going to be? We make false starts, try to be all sorts of different people, and then find we cannot. We are not such people at all, and there comes to us a terrible sense of failure. Life seems so short when one is very young. I can remember feeling that twenty-two (the august age to which one of my friends had attained) was *very* old, and that it really could not matter what happened to anyone after they were thirty. When one is young, how short life is, and how urgent it is that one should know the sort of person he wants to be and whether he has the capacity to be that person.

Now when we are middle-aged there is one great

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factor in our favour. We either know what sort of person we are, or at least we have the materials for knowing. Perhaps some day psychology will have reached a point of wisdom at which it will be able to help us while we are much, much younger, to guide our lives and to know the aim that we ought to set before us; for if there is one lesson that life teaches more than another, I think it is this—that we must try to be the very best kind of person *of the kind that we are*, but that it is fatal to try to be some other kind. That lesson psychology is teaching us to-day—that we must be ourselves, we must devote ourselves to being the very best that is in us, we must carry the powers we have to their highest point; but we must not waste our time and strength in trying to be some other kind of person altogether.

If then, by the time you are middle-aged, you know what sort of person you are, how much more direct, how much more smooth, how much more sure your path can be in the future! Instead of wasting your strength in a vain effort to be somebody quite different from any person that is implicit in you at all, you know now the sort of person that you are. You do not know at all how greatly you may be that person. You do not know that, even when you are middle-aged. You do not know how far you may go along that path; but you do know what path it is. I am not speaking of one's career. Sometimes that changes, even in middle-age. But your temperament, your character, your

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psyche, you know that by now. Or if some of you do not yet know what kind of person you are, you have at least got the materials for knowing. You have lived—how long? Let us say fifty years.

In fifty years you have made enough mistakes and achieved enough successes and followed your path in life sufficiently, with all your false starts, to know, if you choose, what kind of person you are, and while psychology is still in its present rather inchoate condition, that is something that we may be thankful for. Take stock of yourself. If you are discouraged, if you feel that middle-age is rather dreary, if you would like to go back even to those false starts, since, after all, they meant the possibility of a start, take stock of yourself. Why did you make all those mistakes? What are the obstacles that you were or are up against? Are they outside you, or are they within you? Have you chosen wrong? Is it possible for you to choose again? If it is not, what can you make of life where you are? You have all the material; the young have not. They *have* to make their adventures and take their risks, because all their experience is before them; but you have got that experience. Set it down, even, if you like, on paper: the things you have succeeded in, the things you have failed in, the things you might have done once, and did not, and why you did not. Think in a dispassionate and coldblooded way. Consider where you stand, and if you do that faithfully, honestly, sincerely, you will be in a position

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to move with much greater certainty, to be a much more steady, poised and effective person than you could while you were making shots in the dark, as you had to do when you were young. There will come into your life the sense of effectiveness, the sense of knowing what you are about and where you are going, and the fret and fever, the heartbreaking sense of failure which pursued you when you were making one false start after another, will pass away. I asked myself this morning, as honestly as I could, would I go back now to be young again if I could? If I could be twenty again, would I? For a moment I thought, "Yes, I would if I could," and then I asked myself why, and do you know what the reason was? It was because I was imagining myself going back to twenty with all the knowledge of myself that I have at forty-seven. I figured to myself that I would not waste my time again trying to be someone quite other than anything I ever could be. I imagined myself going back to be twenty with all that I have gained in the process of years. I wanted to go back and avoid all the mistakes I have made, and all the time that I have wasted, with the knowledge of myself that middle-age has given to me. Well, anyone would like to do that, because all of us have mistakes we wish we had not made, and lost opportunities we wish we had not lost; and if anyone were to say, "Go back now, and avoid all those errors," who that has any penitence in him at all would not say, "Thank

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God. I will go, and no more make these mistakes." But when I asked myself, would you go back and be twenty *as you were at twenty*? Would you do it then? No, indeed I would not. Why should I go again through all those blunders and stupidities, through all that fret and anxiety, and lose what I have learned?

To-day I have instead the knowledge which comes with middle-age, and which gives a thrill to the middle-aged. I realise that at this point of life, standing, so to speak, on the watershed of life, death becomes real in a sense that it cannot be real to the young. The young do not really expect to die, no, not when the chances of death are all round them. When men go into battle, ninety-nine out of a hundred expect that they will come out safe. They go into it, perhaps, with terror in their hearts, brave as they are. They know that they may be struck. And yet there is an invincible conviction in the minds of most that they will not—that they are of those who will come out safe. But when we come to middle-age there comes suddenly a thrilling sense of the reality of death. It is not any longer a mere fact of common knowledge that we must die: it is a reality. We shall die and go on to some other life, and all that we do here and now has a significance there. What we are now, and what we make of the rest of our lives is part of our schooling for the life hereafter. Everything we do and say and think counts for that. Do you think your

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education at school and college for life in this world, with all its mystery, is half as wonderful as the education of life itself for death? How little the young know of life! How full of romance and mystery and wonder it is! Yes, but they know more about life here than you and I know about life hereafter.

This consciousness comes, I think, with a sudden reality, when we reach the middle of our life and perhaps reckon with ourselves, "I have lived now longer than I have yet, in the normal way, to live." When death becomes a reality to us so, it brings a sense of wonder, a background of infinity into this life, which makes the idea of middle-age being dreary or dull impossible.

I never felt life half so romantic as I did the first time I realised—not *knew*, for we all know it—but *realised*—that I should have to die, and that this life on earth is just a stage.

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Has had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar."

And, coming from afar, we pass on this earth for a while, and go on. That is what makes life so significant. What would life matter, after all, if this were all? The significance and the wonder and the romance of life is in its preparation for another and yet greater adventure. Sir James Barrie, who has said more true and wonderful things than any man of this generation, never said

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anything more wonderful and true than this—"To die must be an awfully great adventure." The radiance of that adventure shines on us when we begin to realise the significance of our lives as an episode here, in some infinite hereafter.

So it matters tremendously when you are middle-aged and have made many mistakes, and are even, perhaps, in the wrong way altogether, that you should set to work here and now to use the rest of your life, not as though life were dreary and dull, but as an episode in a great journey, whose end is God.

Set to work and discipline yourself. One of the dreadful things about being middle-aged is that other people do not discipline us in the way they used to when we were young. We can always have the most comfortable chair in the room. Nobody will tell us that we are eating too much, or that we are eating the wrong things! I once knew an elderly lady who had so delicate a digestion that she could not eat bread: she could only eat hot scones. We used to say to one another that she was silly and greedy, but do you think we ever said that to her face? If I had eaten hot scones at twenty and said I could not digest bread, I should have been told the truth about myself. But we can let ourselves go when we are middle-aged, because there are very few people in a position to pull us up. That is perhaps even more true of men than it is of women. They are "the head of the family," and how many of your

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families, gentlemen, are going to discipline you? If the children do, you think they are merely impertinent. If the wife does, she has to do it so exquisitely carefully that it is not really as good discipline as it ought to be. Remember therefore that you can pull up the young people, or you can at least make them know that they are not exactly the ideal people in the home they might be; but how about you? How easy it is now to escape the discipline of life in little things! I do not mean the great big things that overwhelm us all sometimes but those little things which, properly treated, make us strong enough to deal with the big things.

Really, most of us eat too much. That sounds a mundane thing to say from a pulpit, but it is not unimportant. When Dr. Julia Seton urged us to fast, she said it was especially good for those who were middle-aged, and quoted a certain saying of our Lord's:—

“ Shall the children of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them ” or the young fast while life is full and vigorous and strong and splendid? The time will come when they will lose that. “ Then shall they fast in those days.”

We middle-aged people have ceased to grow physically. We shall not grow any more. Life is not demanding much of us in that sense. We should not clog our bodies by giving them what they do not need. Deny yourself, discipline yourself. It is a very ancient rule of the great religions of the world, that people should fast sometimes. It

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is not for nothing that they develop that discipline. In middle-age especially we should advance to a new and heroic mastery over our bodies.

Discipline yourself intellectually. It is not too late to learn. Learning can be made a habit, and the longer you keep it up the younger you will be in spirit. Do not say it is too late for you to learn. Try and see whether you are not cleverer than you thought! If you will feed your mind (which goes on developing after the demands of the body have ceased) it will go on growing. It is at the point at which you say—or find yourself inclined to say—"it is too late for me to learn this and that and the other" that you begin to grow old. Youth is full of curiosity and desire to learn, but by degrees we find that learning is difficult, and involves a good deal of energy and trouble. We begin to dread "the pain of a new idea" and the old ideas seem quite good enough. So at middle-age we are inclined to believe that it is too late. It is too late at that exact moment when you are resigned to its being too late! For not to be able to change is to begin to die, and as long as you can change, as long as your mind can grow and your intellect take things in, your spirit is still young; and being young, it keeps all the rest of you young.

Then, because you know who you are and what you are, what your line in life is, you need not be in a state of anxiety and haste. A certain peace of mind should come to you, a certain sense of balance and serenity. Take time, even if you have

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to take it by violence. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Take time to be quiet. It is not displeasing, it is not offensive, for the young to be in a hurry. Perhaps they ought to cultivate quietness, but it is natural for them to be in haste. They have so much to do, so much to understand, so much to know. But there is something repellent about the middle-age that has no serenity and no poise, that is always racketting about mentally, that has no peace in its heart. After all, you have got away, or should have got away, from that fever and fret—in return for what? Not just vacancy, not just dulness, but peace. The peace which the world cannot give, but which you must take, have time to take, and keep your mind at rest.

In that silence which is far, far more necessary to you than to the young, you will know yourself better, and you will know others also, and knowing them you will believe in them, for this certainly life has taught us, that every human being has capacities for goodness, and even for greatness, and that cynicism and disappointment and disillusion are simply the evidence of the egotist against all the history of humanity. The blows that have fallen upon you, the ideals that you found it so difficult to believe in, the disillusionment that sets in for you, the disappointments in other human beings, these things are your experience. Look abroad, and see whether it is not a fact that it is goodness and love and brotherliness

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and friendship, and essential decency that holds the world together. What do these people mean who tell us that human nature is so evil? Are they really so ignorant as to suppose that if the world were more evil than good it could hold together at all? The evidence of their own experience should at least include this great fact, that only good things can cohere, that only goodness binds and creates and holds together, and that therefore if the world holds together at all it is because there is more good in it than bad. These ideals that you find it so difficult to hold—why do you find it difficult? Because of your personal disappointment? Because people have disappointed you? Because they have misjudged you and treated you unkindly and been ungrateful for the things you did for them? Do you not realise if you look at yourself, how much it is your fault? Those things that hurt most savagely when we are young will not hurt so much when we are older, and not because we have grown cynical and think it does not matter, but because we have begun to understand why these things happen.

Why do people seem ungrateful? I will tell you. Almost always it is because they have not understood what you have tried to do for them. When people do understand, their gratitude is almost pathetic. Some little tiny thing that costs you nothing will bring you a world of gratitude, because the person for whom you did it understood the thing you did. The thing which does not bring

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you gratitude either you have done badly, and therefore did not deserve any, or the apparently ungrateful person does not understand. Have *you* always understood? Have you not a thousand times received benefits and not had the faintest notion what they cost to other people? If you are such a good, kind, decent person and can in your own conscience count a thousand times when you were ungrateful, and yet you know you were trying to behave decently, why should you be so bitter against others? Perhaps they are trying to behave decently, just as hard as you are, when they misjudge you. Do you never misjudge them? How can you possibly judge anyone without knowing them, and you do not know anyone perfectly, not anyone at all, and yet you utter a judgment every time you open your lips. Do you remember that moving passage in one of George Eliot's novels, in which she says, "Perhaps at the very moment that you are criticising someone for his failure, he is suffering an agony of regret for the thing he did wrong." You would not misjudge him—you would not judge him at all if you knew that. If the world misjudges you, why need you be cynical about it? After all, would you like people to know everything about you? They cannot be perfectly just unless they do. Do you want them to? You know you do not. There is not one of us that has not got some reserves that only God can know. Well, then, why should you be discouraged or cynical, or think evil of the world because people

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do not judge you quite wisely and are not always as grateful as you think they should be?

Middle-age should bring a deep kindliness of view, and a deeper understanding of oneself and a deeper understanding of other people. Listen, be silent, pray ; because your time is shorter than it was twenty years ago, it is all the more necessary that you should direct it rightly now. Life and death are to you greater adventures than when you were young. You had more time then to make your mistakes. Now you have less time, more knowledge. Go directly on your path, and remember that death is not the end. It is only the beginning of something else.

Does not that bring back to you the romance and the glory of youth ? Christ, as I reminded you at the beginning, knew no middle-age in our sense of the word, but His experience in that comparatively short life went so deep that we find Him at the heart of all experience. He went through all the gamut of human experience, and in the end He said what we must all learn to say, "Father, into Thy hands I trust My spirit." All that you are doing, learning, being now is an education for that moment, and beyond it. Into the hands of God trust your spirit.

REV. CHARLES BROWN, D.D.

REV. CHARLES BROWN, D.D.

As a child of eight he started to work on a farm, but always passionately fond of reading, he was able to enter both the University and the Baptist College at Bristol, and in 1883 he entered the Ministry at Nailsworth. He became President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain in 1910, and of the National Free Church Council in 1912. Since 1890 he has occupied the pulpit at Ferme Park Baptist Church, London. He is the author of the following : " Talks to Children on Bunyan's Holy War," " The Wonderful Journey," " Children on the King's Highway," " Letters of Christ," " The Message of God," " Devotional Commentary on James and Ephesians and Acts."

GOD SPEAKING TO MAN

REV. CHARLES BROWN, D.D.

" God who in many portions and in many ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son . . . by whom also He made the worlds."

Hebrew i, 1-2.

A MOST impressive beginning to a truly great letter. A statement which may be said to be the foundation on *which Holy Scripture rests*. If it be not true it is not too much to say that the Bible is a fraudulent book from cover to cover. Because from Genesis to Revelation it insists upon the statement made solemnly here, viz. that God, the author of the universe, who made the worlds, as this writer says, *speaks* to man. You ask, how? And the answer of the text is, "In many ways"—and that is really the answer of the Bible. In a dream, a vision of the night or of the day. By works of power. By storm and wind. By the mysterious order of the universe as the Psalmist says, "The heavens declare the glory of God," and by the still small voice which speaks in a man's conscience and in his soul, convincing him of wrong and right and by history, the fate of nations and individuals. Then it will be observed that the writer divides the past from the

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present—"Of old time by the prophets, in these days by His Son." He speaks to some persons *through other persons*. That does not mean, as I understand it, that He was unwilling to have direct intercourse or communion with these other persons. It may possibly mean that they had not the capacity or the fitness to receive direct communications, that they would disbelieve or misunderstand them, that they had no ear for the music and no eyes for the glory save as each was interpreted by one who understood.

I

You know what Mrs. Browning says about the burning bush :

"Earth's crammed with heaven
And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round and gather blackberries."

It is highly probable that many a Midianite shepherd, seeing the bush burning with fire which Moses saw, would have seen nothing in it but the glow of the sunset or the sunrise. The prophet of old time was called a seer, we read ; and you may say with equal truth, that he might have been called a *hearer*. You will not doubt that some men have capacities which other men do not seem to have, and that these capacities, as capacity for music, or

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mathematics, or languages, being zealously cultivated, may place these men in a category apart from other men. You do not deny that certain men have a genius for certain things, though the same genius may be slumbering in others, and the faculty or gift being constantly and diligently exercised may make them authoritative teachers of others. Why should not that be true in the things of the spirit? It is true. It has always been true. A spiritual genius is as great a fact as a literary genius or a commercial or even a political genius. Extraordinary powers diligently used in this direction give a man superior authority in this sphere. "Behold, I have given thee as a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."

Who were these prophets to whom and through whom God spoke? Take a few of them—Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and John the Baptist. Men of great character, whose lives were far above the life of their times. Men who brooded over the great mysteries and problems which lay heavy on human life, with a quick eye for wrong and a clear vision of right and marvellous insight; who wrestled in solitude with great questions; who prayed and groped; who gave themselves with wondrous self-abandonment to the service of their kind, asking no honour or reward for themselves and with a marvellous consciousness of God. What wonder if along the line of their brooding and wrestling God met them and *revealed* to them truth that other men were unable or unfit to see? It

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would be a wonder, indeed, if that did not happen. Do you question or doubt the *fact of revelation*? How, then, do you think these men arrived at their sure knowledge of the character of God, that He was *one*, that He was righteous and pure, holy and merciful? They certainly never got it from the prevalent religious ideas of their time, for the gods whom men worshipped not only in the ancient East, but in Greece and Rome, were often no better than men. They had the human passions and even vices in a superlative degree.

You wonder at some of the ideas prevalent in Israel. From your point of view Israel was often a very bad lot; and so they were from their own prophet's point of view. But do let us remember that God's revelation of Himself is always conditioned by man's capacity. Even you cannot impart your loftiest ideas and ideals to a man of base and perverted mind. You can only give him what he can take. What you carry away from the fountain depends on the size of your vessel. And the Bible is *a record* of a progressive revelation, of men's struggles after God and God's revelations of Himself to men, and here and there all through the history you have men with astonishing insight, with clear vision of the truth; clean, pure and true men like Samuel and Isaiah, who become *absolutely certain of God*; who see the invisible God and endure; who know that He speaks and who speak to Him and who are moved by His Spirit to put on record what they have found, who say with perfect assur-

ance to their fellows : " Thus saith the Lord," and who are often carried beyond themselves by visions which surpass their understanding and which come true in after ages

II

But secondly, this writer says God has spoken to us in *these last days by His Son*, and he goes on to say what St. John says in his gospel and what St. Paul says in his letter to the Colossians, " By whom also He made the worlds," and of course if that be true you will begin there. You will begin, I mean, with that completer and fuller revelation. That is, you will begin with the New Testament, which is the record and the only authentic record of the revelation which has come to mankind in Jesus Christ. An altogether extraordinary book, all produced in one age and not like the Old Testament, covering 1,500 years of production. And not an original age either. The first century of the Christian era was a decadent century, Greece had no original thinkers nor had Rome. It was an age of slavish imitations, of worship of the past ; and in that age this book came because Christ came, and it centres in Him. From oral tradition it was committed to writing and, save St. Paul, it was not written by great men. *But it is a great Book.* The greatest book in the world because it deals with the greatest life—a life miraculously great, a life of

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flawless original perfection and of *every* sort of perfection. *St. Paul uses a remarkable word in speaking of Jesus. He speaks of the "many coloured" wisdom of Jesus Christ, and it would be equally permissible to speak of His many coloured goodness. The world has had many samples of character and conduct presented to it which have been labelled goodness, or holiness. We might think of some of them. Asceticism was one: cloistered seclusion or desert solitude, the bare, joyless life, holding aloof from all social pleasures and indeed from human society; refusing what were apparently good gifts of God intended to cheer and comfort men, torturing and starving the body, depriving it of sleep and ease, accounting every sort of pleasure a sin. That is not the type which you see in the New Testament, least of all of Him who said of Himself, "The Son of Man came eating and drinking," and of whom His enemies said, "He receiveth sinners and eateth with them."*

Another type of goodness *is the insipid, meek, mild, harmless, never interfering with men's ways of living, never using strong or passionate speech, a kind of flaccid good nature, unmoral, beneficent, smiling on everything good or evil, with only smooth and gracious words. And that is not the goodness which speaks to men in Jesus Christ. I have often said that the Christ of the New Testament is very different from the Christ of current thinking and representation. The meekness and gentleness and grace are there, but there is far*

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more, something more virile. I can see in the New Testament the record and portrait of a person of tremendous moral majesty. A stern Christ, a Christ in the depths of whose personality passion slumbered and could be awakened by hypocrisy and wrong; Who spoke words of burning rebuke and indignation before which bad men quailed or became furious with hate. I do not know whether we realise that no one has ever lived who was hated as our Lord was hated and no one has ever been loved as He was. And neither would have been true if He had been the unoffending, unresenting, mild and gentle person which some have thought. His words were, in prophetic language, a hammer and a fire, or in the Baptist's language, a fan that winnowed the threshing floor and separated the chaff from the wheat. And it is the strength and the gentleness, the sweeping storm and the sunshine, that make up the perfect character of the Son of God.

And now accept for a moment this perfect character, as manifestly all His early disciples believed, and worshipped Him accordingly. And not only His own disciples but Himself believed. Suppose for a moment that it is true that He uttered the challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Suppose He declared, "I do always the things that please the Father." Suppose Him to have said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father!" Do you not think that when you have such a person He will do some extraordinary things; that He will be possessed of extraordinary powers, even that

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there might be something quite extraordinary about His birth? Does not some light shine from this doctrine of our Lord's perfection upon the *miraculous element in the gospels*? It is so easy to dismiss the miraculous and to say, "It is impossible," but however clever such a course may seem it is really very unscientific. The real scientific temper does not begin by saying what could or could not happen. It requires no wisdom to say that. True science investigates. It inquires whether a thing really did happen and what is the value of the records. There are plenty of people who are apt to think that a perfect man, morally and spiritually, had no more power over nature, or over pain, or over matter, or over a disordered mind, than they have. And there are people who so surround the Creator with invariable laws that He cannot move without breaking something. To their mind He can only move along certain lines and has no liberty to move outside them. Take the central miracle of the New Testament, as well attested as any fact in history. I mean the resurrection of our Lord—and there is no accounting for the Church or the New Testament scriptures apart from the resurrection—St. Paul does not speak a whit too strongly when he says that he and his fellow apostles are false witnesses, which of course means liars; it is not a mere mistake, it is a lie that they have taught if the resurrection of Christ were not a fact: and there are more than five hundred people involved in the lie, and so far as this world's possessions

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and honour were concerned they had everything to lose and nothing to gain by the lie.

But a person who rises from the dead and does not die again is an altogether extraordinary person, and it may be presumed will be possessed of powers which are not found in ordinary men.

I am aware that there are people who hold by the teaching of Christ who stumble at His miracles, who especially hold by the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. Well, now let this be said, that there is nothing in the miracles of our Lord nearly so marvellous as His personal claims. Even if you leave out the fourth Gospel for the sake of argument, because some people declare it to be more of a philosophy than a history. Take the Sermon on the Mount alone for a moment ; the words of Christ. They are not words merely of lofty morality or piety, but you detect a most unusual note of authority in them. They are the words of one who claims the right to revise the Old Testament scriptures ; and while you listen the preacher becomes the judge and arbiter of human destiny, whom men will call, " Lord, Lord," and who can pronounce judgment on mankind and dismiss men from His presence. You want to know what He thought of Himself. You need go no further than the Synoptical gospels to discover the most amazing and august claims, which would be sheer blasphemy on any other lips. He claims to reveal the Father, to be able to give rest to the human soul, to forgive sins, to be the King of Glory before whose throne the

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nations will be gathered. Is anybody daring enough to say he doubts whether our Lord uttered these words? Well, they are in all the oldest MSS. and in the writings of the fathers, as truly as the Sermon on the Mount, and they show at least what the people who lived nearest to Him believed about Him while those were alive who remembered Him. They did not regard Him merely as a man of extraordinary goodness, who brought to them a higher knowledge of God, and with whom they shared a great faith in the reality and the saving love of God. They worshipped Him as God. It was His person they worshipped with awe and wonder as a great mystery, and as God manifest in the flesh between whom and themselves was a great gulf of moral distance.

III

And there is one thing more to be said, and said very emphatically, viz. that many of His great claims have been fulfilled in the experience of individuals. That wherever people have believed and acted upon the record they have invariably been made better. You have this to say of the speech of God to men as enshrined in the Bible, this which is contained in the Bible itself, "Holy Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation." And this, "Men are born anew by the word of God which liveth and abideth"—and this, "It is able to save your souls." It is placed on record indis-

putable that the story of Jesus and His gospel has transformed human life wherever it has been accepted. And yet I would not say that the book had done it, but Jesus Christ, whom it declares and whom apart from it we should not have known. Surely the greatest function and use of Holy Scripture is to lead men to Him. To Him it bears witness. Of Him prophets spoke and psalmists sang. The whole library—the Divine library, which was one of the earliest names given to the Holy Scriptures—bears witness to a revelation of God made to men as they were able and eager to receive it. And it is put on record for us “The things that were written aforetime were written for our learning.” For what purpose? Why, surely to lead us to Christ, to bring us under His saving efficacy to bring the soul into vital and saving contact with Him. And the question this evening is not, What is your theory of inspiration or of revelation? But has your theory of the Bible or your knowledge of the scriptures led you to Him? You know what had happened in the time of Christ. There was what might be termed a worship among the Jews of their sacred writings—the law, the prophets and the Psalms. I suppose it was the one book the Jews had. It was history and law book, hymn book and worship book, and the book of wise maxims of life. They copied and re-copied it with religious care and devotion. They counted its letters, protected its interpretation and were in completest bondage to its outward letter. But

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they missed its spirit ; the breath of its inspiration went past them. The book became a kind of fetish and charm. They became blind to the very purposes of God revealed to the men who had written the books and strangers to the spiritual experiences and hopes which it recorded. They read the law—as St. Paul says—with the veil over their hearts, and a very thick veil it was, a veil of pride and prejudice, of self-satisfaction with their own ecclesiastical performances, which completely hid the face of God, and so this amazing thing came to pass. The supreme revelation of God came, the living Word, “The word became flesh and dwelt among them full of grace and truth,” and they were blind to His glory and deaf to His appeals. Here is His own word to them: “Ye search the Scriptures, for in *them* ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me and ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” I do not think we are in the same condition as the Jews. I do not think that our people are searching the scriptures. There are plenty of people discussing the Bible who are almost entirely ignorant of its contents, who only know of two or three difficult passages and puzzling incidents and who know nothing of its great poetry, its impassioned pleas for righteousness, its noble examples of heroic courage and devotion in service and suffering, its tender and beautiful conceptions of the love and mercy of Almighty God. And they are just as ignorant of what the Bible has done—its emancipating and

elevating work, that it has destroyed tyrannies and created brotherhood, that it has been the champion of the poor and the oppressed, that it has broken the fetters of the slave socially and spiritually, that it has healed broken hearts and strengthened weary souls and built up noble and splendid characters; and all because it has led men to Christ the Living Word, the Life indeed, the only Saviour and Lord of men. It is He who speaks in the scriptures—not by His words only, but by His life and death and resurrection, and it is through the scriptures that men have come in all lands and ages to know Him, Whom to know is life eternal.

THE LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM.

THE LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM
(*Rt. Rev. Herbert Hensley Henson, D.D.*).

DR. HENSON was educated privately and at Oxford, where he gained a 1st Class in Modern History, and in 1884 he became a Fellow of All Souls' College. He has been Head of Oxford House, Bethnal Green; Vicar of Barking; Chaplain to the Lord Bishop of St. Albans; Canon of Westminster Abbey; Rector of St. Margaret's; Sub-Dean of Westminster; Dean of Durham; Bishop of Hereford; and Select Preacher at both Oxford and Cambridge. In 1920 he was appointed Bishop of Durham. He is the author of: "Apostolic Christianity," "Puritanism in England," "The Creed in the Pulpit," "Robertson of Brighton," "Christian Liberty."

THE SIGN OF THE HERALD ANGELS

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"And this is the sign unto you : ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." St. Luke ii, 12.

I

THE first picture of the world's Redeemer is this which presents Him as a newly born Infant in the hastily improvised cradle of a manger, tenderly guarded by His mother. Let us ask what for mankind is the significance of this "Sign." What for the Church is herein the revelation of Duty. Two truths lie on the surface of the sacred story. Mankind receives two lessons of incomparable importance and supreme difficulty. First, a lesson about human nature ; next, a lesson about human fortune. The Sign of "the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" tells us that the Creator has stepped forth from behind the Veil in order to rectify two obstinate errors of humanity, which have wasted the fair universe and darkened the life of man. The Infant in its manger-cradle raises before us the whole pageant of what we rightly emphasise as the natural relationships ; and regard as the occasion and basis of the domestic duties. We see that the Salvation of Man

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is not to be such as the pagan saints had imagined, and as misguided Christian saints, following pagan lights, have taught, a Salvation which does violence to human nature, and justifies neglect of domestic responsibilities. The grand delusion of asceticism is disallowed and discredited on the threshold of the Christian revelation. Marriage, child-birth, upbringing of children, all that goes to the making of home, are claimed, consecrated and commissioned by the Incarnate Redeemer. He Who comes "to save His people from their sins" begins by rescuing these easily abused and often despised relationships of nature from the woeful sophistry which has stamped them as intrinsically evil. He Who has come to liberate mankind from every servitude begins His grand campaign of enfranchisement by demonstrating that the liberty of man is, not an "unchartered freedom" from social obligations, but a willing, self-respecting and affectionate response to all duty. God presents Himself before His creatures in this eloquent humility, rebuking their selfish scorn of natural limitations, and clothing the humble tasks which they would proudly disown with fresh sanctions and a sublime dignity.

II

This lesson of the inherent excellence of human nature, and the eternal validity of the duty which grows therefrom, is accompanied by another lesson,

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scarcely less vital and scarcely less difficult. We observe with solemn wonder that the Creator has willed to "visit His people" in the unpalatable character of a poor, even a destitute, babe. The sacred story gives a reason for the strange cradle in which the new-born Jesus is laid. His blessed mother, we read, "laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." The manger of Bethlehem is the symbol of the world's neglect of the obscure, its hardness to the necessitous, its scorn of the poor. The Incarnate will pass among men as One "Who has no beauty that they should desire Him," who possesses none of the titles to regard which they are accustomed to recognise, Who presents no such credentials as they have been trained to expect. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." He Who has come to vindicate human nature from the dishonouring calumnies of asceticism has come also to break the degrading dominion of worldly conditions, and to make man master of his circumstances, because he has first been made master of himself. Herein the Son of Man will satisfy the persistent demands of the human conscience. Two grand aspirations which—almost infinitely depraved but never wholly unrecognisable—have inspired the nature-worships of mankind and its most virile philosophies, are here disentangled from their historic associations with uncleanness and falsehood, and solemnly reaffirmed. Nature is good,

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and man is free. The franchise is complete within and without. "If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." "In His light we shall see light," and find in our experience also that service of others is not the rival, but the condition, of self-respect.

III

Respect for the natural relationships and superiority to fortune may have a familiar and commonplace aspect to-day, but if we carry back our minds two thousand years, and consider the world as it was then, we cannot but admit that both were far from familiar or commonplace features of civilised society. There is perhaps some risk at the present time that we shall underrate the services of Christianity to the progress of mankind. It demands a real effort of the historic imagination to reproduce that ancient society into which, "in the fulness of the time," Jesus was born. We are easily cheated by superficial parallels into supposing that the world then was very similar to the world now, and the delusion is assisted by the unfortunate and irrational emphasis too commonly placed by Christians themselves on those features of their religion which are truly in no respect distinctive—forms of government, methods of worship, popular devotions and the like. If, however, we take some characteristic feature of ancient society, such as the exposition of children, or the deliberate working

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to death of old slaves, or the association of religion with the public prostitution of men and women, or the gladiatorial shows, or the deification of the Emperors, or the practically unlimited liberty of divorce, and think out the ideas and beliefs which are implied in it, we shall perhaps be able to gain a juster view of that world into which Jesus was born. You may say, and say justly, that modern society also is stained by terrible scandals, that the records of the police courts and the disclosures of the divorce courts tell the story of a deep and widespread corruption ; but you know all the time that these scandals are now universally admitted to be scandals, and that the serious thought of Christendom is steadily directed towards the removal of the hardships and injustices which shadow life. I would be willing to stake the credit of Christianity as a social influence on the single issue of its handling of the natural relationships. The vindication of the union of the sexes from the taint of intrinsic impurity, the treatment of women, the honour paid to wifehood as the crown and climax of womanhood, and to motherhood as the crown and climax of wifehood, the tender regard for children, and the jealous wardship of the home—these are the grand titles of Christianity to the gratitude of men and women even though they will not look beyond the interests of this temporal life. Extend your view ; admit the wider range of the life beyond ; see all the natural relationships in the light of eternity ; associate all human

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duty with the Final Judgment of God ; and strengthen all human virtue with the power of His prevailing will ; and you will judge Christianity more fairly, but even on the limited and inadequate view of a reasonable scepticism you must admit the immense and invaluable services of that Gospel which on the first Christmas Day shone upon the world.

IV

Let none suppose that the ideas which the Gospel has carried into the general acceptance of civilised men are now so firmly rooted that in no conceivable circumstances can they be lost to mankind. The natural relationships are at once the strongest and the weakest point of modern civilisation ; the strongest manifestly, for it is because the great moral truths on which society rests are now enshrined in myriads of homes strongly built on the Christian conception of marriage, that the essential conditions of social permanence, order and liberty, are secured ; the weakest hardly less manifestly, for it is precisely with respect to the natural relationships that Christianity comes into the most evident and violent conflict with deep currents of human selfishness, and bars passionately-held aspirations of modern men. Women, encircled by the traditional homage of Christendom, and still generally regarded from the standpoint of the Gospel, may forget the dangers and degradations

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from which they have been slowly set free, but the student of modern life knows too well that, close on the heels of the fashionable advocacy of a misnamed equality of the sexes, which ignores the facts of nature and the laws of God, presses the old licentiousness under which the ancient world sank. I will not pursue the subject further; it is enough to have indicated by a few sentences one of the gravest "signs of the times," gravest of all in the opinion of those who hold that the basis of the State is the family, and that the only sound basis of the family is that pure and disciplined and lifelong union of man and woman which constitutes Christian marriage.

V

From the witness to the world which Bethlehem bears, let us turn to the duties which it brings to the Church. What message does the "Sign" of "the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" bring to us who are gathered here on the Birthday of Jesus to worship Him as our Lord? First of all, surely, we are called to a greater reverence and a more solicitous regard for our own home life; and, next, to a genuine respect for the home life of others. Perhaps we may find here a rough but not untrustworthy test by which to judge the quality of the social policies which are pressed on our support at the present time. How

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does any project affect the integrity, independence and strength of the family? Especially in the treatment of children, this question will help us to distinguish the sound policy from the false, reform that is healthy from reform that is fallacious. There is, happily, at the present time a deep and widely-extended desire to improve the conditions of childhood, to shield the young from the perils to which their ignorance, or misfortune, or the circumstances of their life expose them; to make sure that loving care watches over their earliest years, and that innocent joy lightens their brief period of irresponsible life. This great fund of goodwill towards children is itself mostly the creation of the Christian religion, and its existence makes possible almost unlimited improvements in the conditions of child-life in our society. Here surely is the right test of every project affecting children—does it treat the child as primarily the member of a family, and therefore always to be dealt with through its divinely constituted guardians, its own parents? Or does it really, if not avowedly, proceed on the false assumption that the child belongs primarily to the State, and that its own parents may be ignored in schemes for its welfare? I confess that I am not satisfied with some present developments of political philanthropy. I fear that the truly fundamental interest of the family is not sufficiently kept in view, and I know that there are strong currents of opinion definitely hostile to the integrity and independence

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of the home. Surely Christians should stand forth in the modern State firmly for the guardianship of the family, and work resolutely and unselfishly for the reform of whatsoever social conditions tend to weaken and degrade the home life of the people. There is very much in our industrial life which is hostile to the family. All the questions which we call economic, and which together constitute that social problem which weighs on modern communities with such threatening insistence, bear more or less directly and obviously on the family. Unemployment, for instance, must degrade and may disperse the family of the artisan; the inordinate cost of housing and its woefully inadequate character bear directly not only on the comfort but on the health and morality of the family; the whole question of women's work at every point affects the birth and nurture of children, and the discipline of the family; the due regulation of the traffic in alcohol bears cogently on the self-respect of the working classes, and thereby affects vitally the welfare of their families. It is the civic function of the Christian to insist, in season and out of season, on the integrity, independence and well-being of the family. Let us take care that the new secularist enthusiasm for the State does not carry us back into the old pagan contempt for the home. Rather let us seek to realise the fine thought of St. Chrysostom when he described the home as "a little church." Yes, that is a true picture of the Christian home, however humble be its circumstances or meagre its

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wealth. There God is worshipped in the way of common duty. There the discipline of Christ is expressed in loving authority and willing obedience. There parents are honoured and children treasured. The Christian home is an oasis of affection and cheerfulness in a society darkly shadowed by strife and sorrow. It is a beacon of guidance and hope to those who wander in a trackless world. As once above the lowly home in Bethlehem, there shines again the Star of a Divine Epiphany, for the promise finds fulfilment there that "where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them."

REV. NORMAN MACLEAN, D.D.

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THE MEDICINE FOR DEPRESSED SOULS

REV. NORMAN MACLEAN, D.D.

*"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the
house of the Lord for ever."*—Psalm xxiii, 6.

THIS Psalm is probably the first we ever learned; it is the last we shall forget. There are probably none in this church this morning who remember the time when they could not repeat the twenty-third Psalm. More than any other it has woven itself into the very texture of the human soul. When we think of all the generations that have sung it, voicing their aspirations heavenward, what an appeal it makes to the imagination. Catholics and Orthodox, Anglicans and Presbyterians, Baptists and Wesleyans have sung it, and singing forgot everything except that God's Providence was around them like a shepherd with his rod and staff. Secretly in the catacombs, cobblers and slaves, "the most vulgar and illiterate of mankind," sang it. It was so often sung amid the flames that it gained for itself the name of the martyrs' Psalm. Here in Edinburgh on a winter day in 1681, two honest lasses, as Peden calls them, stood on the scaffold ready to die for conscience' sake—Isabel Alison and Marion Harvie. "Marion," said Bishop Paterson, "you

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would never hear a curate ; now you shall hear one," and he called on one of his clergy to pray. "Come, Isabel," was the girl's answer (she was only twenty years of age), "let us sing the twenty-third Psalm." And their young voices as they sang

"Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill,"

drowned the voice of the curate. It was not merely the simple and the unlearned on whom this Psalm cast a spell ; for it was with these same words that Sir William Hamilton, the only earnest man Carlyle found in Edinburgh, composed his mind for the last journey : "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." For two thousand years the soul of man with the words of the psalmist's triumphant faith on the lips, has defied death and made the valley of the shadow of death luminous with the radiance of immortality. We may well try this morning to get at the heart of this song of praise and ponder the imagery of green pastures and waters of stillness and paths of straightness and wandering sheep, which render it the most exquisite of lyrics.

I

If we were asked when this Psalm was composed we would probably most of us answer that it was sung by David when he tended his father's sheep. But such an answer would be inevitably wrong.

It would be impossible for a boy to experience the intensity of faith which finds expression here. If we hear a youth using language beyond the reach of his own experience, it grates on us. We have a little word of one syllable by which we designate him. It would be unnatural for a boy to sing of the valley of the shadow of death ; or to celebrate the bounty that prepared a table for him in the presence of his enemies. For he had no enemies then to triumph over.

The whole Psalm pulsates for us with a new life when we realise that it expresses the triumph of faith in the midst of dire calamity. If the Psalm was written by David, it was at the time of Absalom's rebellion. It was then that the King fled down the stony and dark gorge to the Jordan on his way to Mahanaim, with the curses of Shimei in his ears. Well might that narrow gorge become to his stricken heart a symbol of the valley of the shadow of death. Around the exile in Mahanaim friends gathered, and food was supplied by the faithful, so that the table of the King was provided with delicacies even in the presence of his enemies. And there the sight of the shepherds leading their flocks to the pastures, by the still waters, revived the faith of his youth in the heart of the disillusioned King, and he awoke again to the realisation that God was his shepherd, guiding him with His rod and staff.

It was perhaps in the little chamber over the gate, alone with his grief, that David poured out his heart in this song. We can see him even now, across the

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dim years, staggering up the stone steps to the empty chamber over the gate (where the guard waited for their time to go on duty) with the words of doom ringing in his ears : Absalom dead ! dead in the midst of his sin ; with no place for repentance under the sun ! Dead. Irretrievable as fate. A little bare room, but it does not need a very big room for a broken-hearted man to cry in. And from that room there has gone forth through the ages the sob of anguished fatherhood : “ O, my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom ! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son ! ” It was then that the waves and the billows tossed the broken King once more to the feet of God, and laying hold on the Eternal his faltering lips sing the song of faith : The Lord is my shepherd . . . Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

II

It is when we remember these things that we realise the grandeur of the faith that can in the direst calamities see the goodness and the mercy of the Lord. They may seem strange words at the first in circumstances like these ; but when we ponder them we realise their truth. For every experience in life that brings a man to see a glimpse of the eternal and to say the Lord is my Shepherd, is of the goodness and the mercy of God. Life is

filled with experiences just like that. When the house is unroofed the stars appear ; when the life is made solitary, the Great Companion draws nigh. There is no alchemy like the alchemy of faith. It can turn ruin into victory, and death itself into the life immortal.

It has been so all down the ages. Every generation of God's children can show a soul triumphing just like this. When the head and the hands of Richard Cameron, the Covenanter, were carried to Edinburgh in a sack, they were shown to his father, who was then a prisoner in the Tolbooth. The old man was asked if he knew to whom they belonged. Stooping down he kissed the brow of his fair-haired son, and then he said : " I know them ; I know them ; they are my son's, my dear son's ; " and then he added : " It is the Lord ; good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me nor mine, but has made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days." Think of David in the little room over the gate, sobbing over Absalom ; of the old man in the Tolbooth kissing the brow of his murdered son ; of these two, with the blood-drenched centuries between, at one in their trust in the mercy and goodness of God, and you will realise the heights of grandeur to which it is possible for the soul of man to arise.

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III

It is one thing to see the beauty of a Psalm such as this : another to set our own lives to the melody of it. What was it that enabled the psalmists and saints to exult and triumph so in the very shadow of death ? It was this—the living trust in God. For them, God was not isolated from the creatures that he made ; He was not merely a Shepherd but *my* Shepherd. Now the question for us is this : how can we anchor our souls in this same great conviction ? There are doubtless many roads by which it is possible for us to arrive at it. There are at least two suggested in this Psalm. We can come to this living trust (1) by contemplating the loveliness and the goodness wherewith the world is filled ; and (2) by recalling the way along which God has led us and His goodness towards us in the past.

(1) We do not sufficiently realise that there is a way back to the feet of God—starting from every spot on which we see some glimpse of the loveliness wherewith the earth is filled. That is one of the elements by which this song has sung itself into the heart of humanity for two thousand years—its feeling of the beauty in the world. The singer had a heart sensitive to the appeal that a still lake can make to the heart ; he knew what it was to gaze with eyes growing moist on green downs billowing away to the horizon ; he felt the mystic atmosphere that came at eve as shepherds led their flocks to

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the folds. It was just because he allowed his heart to be filled by that sense of the Divine in the world that it was natural to him to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd . . . His goodness is around me like a rod and a staff."

When we find ourselves released from the yoke of the daily task and we steal away to the hills, around whose base the waves of earthly din and striving die away into silence, what a feast of loveliness is spread before our eyes. We are as David in Mahanaim. The world in the darkest age has ever been filled with beauty and radiance and green pastures! Still waters! How that tarn, like polished silver among the hills, with the little asphodel clouds playing in its far depths, and the wine-red slopes rising steep around—leaps up before our minds! We remember the strange state into which we fell as we gazed at it. The silence that is among the lonely hills wrapped us round like a mantle of peace. The body seemed to fade away and we became a living soul. Strange feelings stirred within us and an awe as if in the presence of the Unchangeable.

Speak to Him thou for He hears,
And spirit with spirit shall meet,
Closer is he than breathing;
Nearer than hands or feet.

Why is it that we are so moved? It is just because the spirit of the great Artist who created all that beauty is also in us. Just as when we are suddenly

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arrested by a picture in a gallery, and we find ourselves transported into other realms as we gaze at the beauty glowing on the canvas, what stirs our hearts is not the canvas nor the paint, but the soul of the artist that finds expression through these. If we had not the spirit that inspired him, his handiwork would hang there for us in vain. So also is it with the loveliness of the world. If the spirit of the Supreme Artist were not also in us, we should see nothing any more than the ox sees as he stands in the meadow. We have only to ponder the mystery of the earth's loveliness, to feel the goodness of God with an overwhelming realisation. When John Thomson, the artist minister of Duddingston, accompanied Sir David Brewster up Speyside and came at last to the spot where the full glory of Glenfeshie opened out before their gaze, Thomson gasped forth: "Lord God Almighty." That surely is the perfection of artistic sensibility. In that radiance we are co-workers with God. Each time our hearts are thrilled as we behold, we create it afresh. The elements of beauty are there, but we beholding create the beauty. God is indeed very near, working with us and in us. He is no longer an abstraction. He is a Reality. David felt that dimly; Jesus felt it supremely as he stood on the hill top with face transfigured, or as He watched the clouds curtaining the heavens with splendour; and on moor, shore, or mountain-side we can see such a banquet of beauty spread before our eyes, that we can truly say: This is the work of our

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God ; surely goodness and mercy do follow me.

(2) It is not merely in the contemplation of the beauty of the world that we can realise the good Providence of God, but we can do so also in stirring up our memories and recalling the way in which we have been guided even until now. If each worshipper in this great congregation this morning could be brought to write down the story of their lives, what wonderful tales they would tell of the goodness of the Lord. Why is it that we are here this morning in this sanctuary, waiting on God ? We might so easily have been elsewhere. We might have been with the noisy pursuers of pleasure who are rushing over the face of the land, but who alas ! cannot with all their swiftness escape from themselves ; we might have been numbered with the revellers who pour the vulgarity and slime of the cities over the quiet and beautiful places of our fair land ; we might have been with those who are sacrificing the Lord's Day rest to their base self-indulgence. We are, however, here, following in the footsteps of our Fathers, worshipping and praising God, just because of this, that the Lord has been our shepherd, and that He has guided our steps. One is interested in the sudden arrest the Spirit of God often makes ; in the souls that are snatched as brands from the burning. There is a spice of peril and adventure about their tale when they are prevailed upon to tell it. But far more important than that is the story that most of us

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can tell—the story of how the simple things of life guide the feet God-ward. Our feet have been guided into the ways of peace by things so common that we have scarcely noticed them : by a parent who filled our minds with the songs of faith and hope so that the songs of vulgarity were ever sung to us in vain ; by the teacher who made us see the history of the world as a great scroll flaming with the providence and the judgments of God ; by a sudden flashing of the beauty of God as a great throng of worshippers rose to pour out their hearts before the eternal throne ; by a sentence heard in a little whitewashed meeting house that wandered straight to the heart ; by a page in a book, as Wesley by Law's " *Serious Call*." . . . By these and a thousand common things—for all God's great things are common, as love is common and the sunlight common—have multitudes no man can number been led to the hour when they said with the rapture of self-surrender : " The Lord is my Shepherd . . . goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

IV

This Psalm is the medicine for all depressed and all despondent souls. The true remedy for pessimism is to remember the days of old. We cannot recall the past without being brought to confess that the Lord has been our Shepherd. If He has

been, He now is, and surely will continue to be, our Shepherd. For God is not a bungler ; He brings to perfection whatever He begins. Every blessing and every deliverance in the past is a promise for the future. The waters of stillness and the green pastures are but a faint image of the glory awaiting the souls that trust in our God. For this God is our God for ever and ever : "He will be our Guide even unto death." I like the quaint story told by Luther : "When sorely vexed by the wickedness of the world and the dangers which beset the Church, seeing my wife dressed in mourning I asked the reason. 'Do you not know,' she said, 'that God in heaven is dead?' I exclaimed, 'How can God die? He is immortal and will live through all eternity.' 'And yet,' she said quietly, 'you are so hopeless and so discouraged.' And then I mastered my sadness." Truly the soul that can say the Lord is my Shepherd has nought to do with fear and despondency and trembling for the Ark of God. He is pressing to the goal where he shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Where else could he dwell at last but just there—in the house of the Lord for ever? For if anything be certain this is certain, that God does not create loveliness and souls that thrill as they behold it just to crumble them all into dust and nothingness at the last. . . . The house of the Lord for ever ! Towards that we press with head erect, undaunted, undismayed.

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“If we find that region more like the present than we had imagined, I shall not be surprised. For our interpretation of the Universe depends mainly upon ourselves. Itself is probably infinite and with infinite aspects. The aspect which we and the animals have grown accustomed to has been ingrained during our earth existence; and if we remain ourselves, our powers of interpretation will only gradually enlarge. For a time they will remain the same, and hence our interpretation of conditions round us will remain much the same.....

“But gradually we shall find that our powers are enhanced, and our opportunities for further progress gradually enlarged, beyond our present imagination. This Universe is not a small thing; it is not in the least likely to be limited to our present conception of it. The ether permeates it, and may be a vehicle for our future use, as matter is here. This lump of matter on which we and others live, is very beautiful and interesting and astonishing, but it is not the whole. Away and beyond our finite slight conception of reality lies the realm of the infinite. Humanity is as yet but little risen above the animals, and what it has already accomplished is but a trifle to the splendour that lies before it in the infinite future.”

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